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THE HUME-HAILES RELATIONSHIP

The bicentenary in 1976 of David Hume's death was also the bicentenary of the publication of the first volume of Lord Hailes's *Annals of Scotland*, the work which caused Sir Walter Scott to call Hailes "the restorer of Scottish history".¹ This gives a convenient excuse, if excuse were needed, for re-examining the nature of the personal and intellectual relationship between David Hume and Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes. This reassessment was probably necessary anyway. It attempts to illustrate the nature of Hume's relationship with a man of his own class and station in life, with extensive scholarly interests. Hailes saw in the formidable trio of Gibbon, Hume and Voltaire, three men of genius whose published works threatened the stability of the Christian world of which he was a prominent lay member.²

Eighteenth-century scholars, by virtue of the excellent biographical work of E. C. Mossner,³ are very familiar with the details of Hume's life. With the aid of the enormous flood of philosophical and critical writing on Hume in the last 30 years,⁴ they are equally familiar with Hume's religio-philosophical position, however much individual scholars may disagree on details of that position, and on how far that position has been obscured by Hume himself by the use of literary irony and prudential insincerity.

It is far different with that interesting minor figure, Lord Hailes. His voluminous and miscellaneous writings are *not* well known, and it may be thought that there is place for a modern account of him to be placed alongside McGuinness and Ross on Lord Kames⁵ and Cloyd on Lord Monboddo.⁶ Students of early Scottish history are familiar with Hailes's name and work,

by reason of the *Annals of Scotland*, long accepted as a fundamental reference book for the period of Scottish history it covers. His other historical publications are now little read curiosities. Those who study the anti-Gibbon literature know him as one of the few Christian critics of the *Decline and Fall* to whom Gibbon paid any respect,⁷ and students of the eighteenth century revival of interest in medieval literature will recognise Hailes as Bishop Percy's most important Scottish helper in his work on ballads,⁸ and as one of the most scholarly editors of the Bannatyne manuscript.⁹

What I attempt in this paper is a consideration of the extant Hume-Hailes data from two points of view. The first is an analysis of the personal relationship between the two men, a relationship which moved from friendship to coolness and finally to suspicion and hostility. My second approach is in the key area of their opposing religious beliefs. Hailes belonged, like so many of Hume's Edinburgh friends, to that numerous body of Scottish Presbyterian moderates who found it hard to reconcile Hume's philosophical scepticism and obvious anti-clericalism with Adam Smith's well-known characterisation: "approaching as nearly as possible to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as the nature of human frailty will admit"¹⁰ The paper also allows me to correct some of the popular misconceptions of Hailes, e.g. that he was throughout his life a reserved and stand-offish pedant, a view perpetuated by Henry Grey Graham¹¹ and W. Forbes Gray.¹² I can also correct, more surprisingly, E. C. Mossner's view of Hailes's motivation in publishing Latin versions of Hume's *My own life* and Adam Smith's *Letter*. Mossner is mistaken in believing that, in the posthumous controversy on the life and character of David Hume in the 25 years after his death, Hume's old antagonist Hailes had mellowed into an admiring friend.¹³

TWO MEMBERS OF A SELECT SOCIETY

It had been truthfully said that the eighteenth-century history of Lowland families of Scotland, both great and small, is the history of the Scottish enlightenment. The families of Home, Dalrymple, Fergusson, Dundas, Erskine and others produced a stream of lawyers, scholars, soldiers, philosophers, historians and politicians. David Dalrymple of Newhailes and David Home of Ninewells had very similar backgrounds. Hume, as Home called himself, was the older man by fifteen years. The country estates on which they both lived, the education they both received at Edinburgh College, the Edinburgh life both families enjoyed in their town houses when the law courts were in session, constituted a common cultural inheritance. The education and training of David Hume's father, Joseph Hume, and that of David Dalrymple had strong similarities. Both men received their primary legal training in Edinburgh and completed that training under the Dutch jurists at Utrecht. Both ran country estates and were admitted as advocates, and both were Revolution Whigs and Scottish Presbyterians. Alexander Carlyle regarded Hailes's father, James Dalrymple, politician, lawyer and

landowner, as an admirable man. He tells a revealing story of James Dalrymple's friendship with the deist Collins, which gives an insight into the liberal Christian atmosphere of David Dalrymple's family home:

He told me he knew Collins, the author of one of the shrewdest books against revealed religion. He said he was one of the best men he had ever known, and practised every Christian virtue without believing in the Gospel; and added, though he had swum ashore on a plank—for he was sure he must be in heaven—yet it was not for other people to throw themselves into the sea at a venture. This proved him to be a sincere, though liberal minded, Christian.¹⁴

David Hume's father's career as lawyer and country gentleman was brought to an abrupt end by his early death in 1731. Hailes's father lived prosperously until 1751. There were, however, at least four striking differences between the future historians of Scotland and England. David Dalrymple was an eldest son and could look forward to inheriting Newhailes; David Hume was a younger son and his patrimony "according to the mode of my country, was, of course, very slender".¹⁵ David Dalrymple received his pre-University education at Eton, probably with a view to practising at the English Bar; David Hume was educated at home before he went to college. The third difference concerns career choice. Hailes plunged successfully into a legal career which denied him only one prize, the Presidency of the Court of Session. Hume was also intended for the legal profession but "found an unsurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of Philosophy and general Learning".¹⁶ Hailes's primary objective was legal success; Hume's ruling passion was, in his own words, "love of literary fame".¹⁷ The fourth difference was the most fundamental of all. Hailes, throughout his life, was a convinced Christian moderate, unconvinced that a moral sense and religious scepticism were compatible. As he put it to James Boswell in 1763.

I have had occasion more than once to advise young men when just about to launch into the vast ocean of life; recommending them to a wise and mercifull God. I desired them to remark that of those to whom Christianity had been fairly set forth none disbelieved but the men who were loose in their lives or who were in the general tenor of their conduct, proud and self-conceited. From this rule I am positive there are very few exceptions, few at least have I found either in reading or in experience. Scepticism is an uncomfortable thing.¹⁸

It was to the same James Boswell that Hume confided, in the last year of his life, that he had never entertained any belief in religion since he began to read Locke and Clarke. He was not, apparently, being jocular when he said "that when he heard a man was religious, he concluded he was a rascal, though he had known some instances of very good men being religious."¹⁹

It is hardly surprising that the friendship of Hailes and Hume did not prosper, despite their common cultural background, their large circle of common friends and their mutual participation in the busy social and cultural life of Edinburgh in the 1750s.

Hailes's memorandum books for the years 1754, 1758 and 1759 have survived.²⁰ These show the successful young lawyer attending to business at the Session house, meeting clients in the taverns, having tea at Lady Haddington's and discussing Voltaire, attending the Tron Church on Sundays, the Theatre on Wednesdays, and the dancing assemblies on Thursday nights; meeting his beloved MM in the Meadows, and attending meetings of the Revolution Club set up to celebrate the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. A characteristic activity of Hailes was his membership of the Select Society, whose other members included David Hume, Adam Smith, Alexander Carlyle and Alexander Wedderburn.²¹ Hume was Treasurer and Sir David Dalrymple, from July, 1754, was Chairman of the committee for questions. Typical questions approved for debate included capital punishment, the ancients versus moderns controversy and the desirability of stage performances. Rule IX laid down that the Select Society would hear "any subject of debate, except such as regard Revealed religion, or which may give occasion to vent any principles of Jacobitism."²² Hume said to Ramsay in a letter of 1755:

It has grown to be a national concern. Young and old, noble and ignoble, witty and dull, laity and clergy, all the world are ambitious of a place amongst us and on each occasion we are as much solicited by candidates as if we were to choose a member of Parliament.²³

In the same letter Hume attempts to characterise some of the members and says, rather cryptically, of Hailes. "Sir David's zeal entertains."²⁴ In view of the strict rule forbidding religion as a subject of debate, Hume's remark presumably refers to Hailes's zeal for the extension of the Select Society's activities into fields of practical endeavour. Hailes was a leading protagonist of the Select Society's practical offshoot, the Edinburgh Society for encouraging arts, sciences, manufacturers and agriculture in Scotland. Hailes read the proposal which initiated the Edinburgh Society to members on the 12th of February, 1755, and the name "Edinburgh Society" was given to the venture on 12th March, 1755. In a manuscript characteristically headed "Notes of my endeavours to serve the public", Hailes claims that he was "instrumental in establishing the Edinburgh Society; wrote preface to the first Plan of that Society."²⁵ The plan was published as a separate pamphlet and reprinted in the *Scots Magazine* and the newspapers. I quote the introduction here to illustrate the practical bent of Hailes's intelligence, which can be properly contrasted with Hume's speculative spirit:

To encourage genius, to reward industry, to cultivate the arts of peace, are objects deserving the attention of public-spirited persons.

That the inhabitants of *Scotland* may become diligent in labour and excellent in arts, is the concern of all who indeed love their country.

For these good and useful purposes, the EDINBURGH SOCIETY was instituted. The Gentlemen of whom the Society is composed, were sensible that arts and manufacturers can never be effectually promoted, unless a spirit of emulation can be excited in the various

artists and manufacturers; a proper distribution of premiums seemed to them the most reasonable method of exciting this spirit.

The experience of IRELAND has demonstrated the usefulness of such premiums, when wisely directed and equitably distributed.

The *Society* resolved to follow a plan so happily devised and conducted in a neighbouring nation: a small sum was accordingly raised for the year, by the voluntary contribution of the members of the Society; which was appointed to be distributed in premiums to artists and manufacturers of superior merit or industry. With regard to the application of the sum, the Society resolved, That the reward of merit in the finer arts should be honorary; in the more useful arts, generally lucrative.

The voice of the nation applauds this undertaking; many persons of distinguished judgement and authority have afforded their patronage to it; all wise men appear interested in its success.

An undertaking so new to this country, so extensive and so complicated, may be attended with difficulties in the execution. A general plan of its management is therefore submitted to the judgement of the public. Experience may point out the errors of the plan, and the opinion of the public may correct them.

However defective the plan of management may be, the intentions of the *Society* are unexceptionable; no selfish considerations have diverted its thoughts from the public good, no project of private utility has been reared on this work of national concern.

To the candid, the liberal, and the lovers of mankind, the *Society* makes this address; earnestly intreat their assistance and advice, and shall always glory in their approbation.

Hailes, who along with George Dempster of Dunnichen²⁶ is one of the best examples of the improving spirit of the times, became one of the ordinary managers of the Edinburgh Society, and remained an active member of the Select Society. Hume and Hailes were in agreement on some of the minor aspects of the Select Society's endeavours. They both supported the movement to abolish "vails" to servants on the grounds that "it corrupted the morals of servants and obstructed hospitality".²⁷ Like most literary Scotsmen in the eighteenth century, Hailes, Hume, Robertson and Blair shared an interest in the extirpation of Scotisms from the writings and speech of educated Scotsmen. Hume was in London in 1761 when the Edinburgh Select Society sponsored the lectures of Thomas Sheridan, and planned the "Select Society for promoting the Readings and Writing of the English language in Scotland". Hume did not admire Sheridan's pretensions, but the lists of Scotisms produced both by him and his theological opponent, James Beattie, tie up with Hailes's work on glossaries of Scottish words. There is a substantial measure of agreement amongst the Select Society group that being able to speak and write Standard English was important. Hailes, to a greater degree perhaps than either Hume or Beattie, retained at the same time his patriotic affection and regard for Scottish history, culture and language.

The common cultural interests indicated above did not prevent the friendship of Hume and Hailes from deteriorating. A very early satirical reference to Hume's work in an anonymous pamphlet by Hailes has gone unnoticed. Hailes had written an undated, anonymous pamphlet entitled *Proposals for carrying on a certain public work in the city of Edinburgh* parodying a serious work of similar title by Sir Gilbert Elliot. It was intended for private distribution and was in the same class of sub-literature as Hume's *Petition of the grave and venerable Bellmen, or Sextons, of the Church of Scotland*, in which Hume had ridiculed the clergy.²⁸ Hume's skit appeared in 1751. Hailes had his turn in 1752 and he says (p. 15):

The art of printing has been carried to the highest perfection amongst us; as witness the late pompous and correct editions of Monsieur Hautboy's compleat Cook, the Reverend Mr. Ralph Erskine's poems, the essays and dissertations of David Hume, Esq. and the Edinburgh Almanack.

Hume's anger at this thrust is revealed in a letter from Hailes to Boswell, 16 August, 1776, a few days before Hume's death. Hailes wrote:

What you mention of Hautboys receipts was, I believe, the first cause of a violent animosity which gradually contracted itself into a driness. I am sorry for the poor man, tho' I doubt of your intelligence as to his disbelief of futurity: it is a common tho' no prudent practice to magnify the number of Atheists, as much as Dodwell diminished the number of Martyrs.²⁹

Hume seemed to have recovered from his bout of anger. In May, 1753, he wrote to Hailes asking him if he would run over Hume's *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, the second edition of which appeared in 1753, and "remark what you think amiss either in Language or Argument".³⁰ Hume acknowledges Hailes's comments in a further letter dated 10 May, 1753. He says he finds them just, and amiably disagrees with Hailes about a suspected Scoticism.³¹ The friendly tone of the correspondence continues in a letter of April, 1754, in which Hume asks for the loan of a book from Hailes's fine library, joking in the postscript that Hailes should follow the advice of Julian the Apostate and extend charity to the heathens. Hailes lent the book; uncharacteristically signs himself "your most faithful well-wisher and humble servant", and suggests that the "once enlightened" Hume did not need the authority of Julian to make such requests.³² Hailes had not supported Hume's application for the office of library-keeper to the Faculty of Advocates, an application also opposed by Hailes's friends and patrons, Robert Dundas, the Elder, Lord President of the Court of Session, and Robert Dundas, the Younger, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates.³³ Hume says: "the violent cry of Deism, atheism and scepticism was raised against me; and twas represented that my election would be giving the sanction of the greatest and most learned body of men in this country to my profane and irreligious principles. . . . Sir David was so excessively holy that nothing could bring him over from the opposition party, for which he

is looked down upon a little by the fashionable company in town. But he is a pretty fellow, and will soon regain the ground he has lost."³⁴

Hume's bantering tone and obvious desire to preserve the civilities of acquaintanceship were finally destroyed by his anger at the action of Hailes and the other curators of the Advocates' Library with respect to the censorship of some French books which Hume, acting in his capacity of Library Keeper, had bought for the library. The incident is well-known and need not be rehearsed at length here.³⁵ Any suggestion that Hailes acted out of malice or religious spleen in this affair is inconsistent with what is known of his moral character. The minutes of the Curators, 27 June, 1754, tells the whole story:

This day Mr. James Burnet, Mr. Thomas Millar and Sir David Dalrymple, Curators of the Library, met in the Library, and having considered that there ought to be stated and regular meetings of the Curators for dispatch of business, relating to the Library, as might from time to time occur, they appointed that the Curators should meet regularly once a fortnight during session time upon Thursday, after the rising of the Lords, and the first meeting to be Thursday next.

And having gone through some accounts for books, lately bought for the library and finding therein the three following French books, *Les Contes de la Fontaine*, *L'Histoires Amoureuses des Gaules*, and *L'Écumoire*, they order that the said books be struck out of the catalogue of the Library and removed from the shelves as indecent books and unworthy of a place in a learned library.

And to prevent the like abuses in time to come, they appoint that after this no books shall be bought for the library without the authority of a meeting of the Curators in the time of session and of two of them in time of vacation.³⁶

No one who has served on a University library committee would question the wisdom of the curators' arguments that they should meet regularly, and that the disbursement of the library's bookbuying funds should be under their policy control. One might well agree with E. C. Mossner, however, that the censoring of alleged indecent books nearly always turns out to be silly³⁷ and this is the verdict of posterity. Silly or not, Hailes's behaviour in this matter is consistent both with contemporary judgements of the books in question³⁸ and with his own views on indecency in print. Whereas Hume's letter to the Lord Advocate closes by saying that he can see nothing terribly undesirable about a little bawdy,³⁹ Hailes's puritanism can be seen in his editorial note prefacing *Ancient Scottish Poems*:⁴⁰

In other respects also this collection differs from the former. *The Evergreen* contains many indecent pieces which ought not to be explained. . . . The editor of this collection has excluded the indecent, and omitted the unintelligible poems.

Hume resigned the keepership of the library in January, 1757. In the intervening period, being unwilling to lose the use of the library, he had kept the office, and had given Blacklock, the blind poet, a bond of annuity for

the salary. Hailes had, I believe, other reasons than moral scruples for his unhappiness with Hume as librarian. He felt that Hume was using the library in his need as a historian to be "master of 30,000 volumes",⁴¹ rather than serving it. Hailes wrote to the antiquary, George Paton, in 1777:

Pray let Berry's Catalogue be known to the keeper of the Advocates' Library: there is now an opportunity which seldom occurs of adding to the collection of English history—it is foolish after having bought so many books in that line, for the Advocates not to make their collection compleat.⁴²

This is a clear hit at Hume's buying of historical books for his own historical research.

Even if the incidents outlined above had never happened it is unlikely that Hume and Hailes would have remained friends. Geographical circumstances drove them further apart. Hume's political life in Europe and Hailes's gradual withdrawal from the social and literary life of Edinburgh after the death of his twin children in 1764, and the death of his wife in childbirth in 1768, reduced the opportunities for social intercourse. Further references to Hailes in Hume's letters are uncharacteristically unamiable. For example, Hume wrote to William Strahan in 1766:⁴³

All I can say of Sir David Dalrymple is that he is now a Lord of the Session, and passes by the Name of Lord Hales or Newhales, I know not which. He is a godly man, feareth the Lord and escheweth Evil, and works out his salvation in with Fear and Trembling. None of the Books Sir David publishes are of his own writing: They are all historical Manuscripts of little or no Consequence.

In the considerable number of references to Hume's writings in Hailes's unpublished correspondence for the same period, Hume is nearly always associated with Gibbon and Voltaire. The three historians are stigmatised as men of great talent whose published writings are inimical to Christianity. An early reference to Hume's religious ambiguities in his published writings can be found in a letter from Lord Hailes to the antiquary, Thomas Birch:

Is Mr. Home's Natural history of religion to meet with no reply in England? He has laid himself very open to his antagonists. He has made some concession to the Christian religion which seem extraordinary—Ch. I. There is a credulity in Ch. II which make one almost apply to the author what King Charles Second said of Vossius⁴⁴

Hailes gives no sign anywhere in his correspondence of regretting the estrangement, however much he may have deplored the circumstances of it. He wrote to Lord Hardwicke in October, 1766: "I imagine that Mr. Hume is in London. He and I have not had much intercourse for several years owing to a foolish quarrel about the Advocates' Library, when he was librarian."⁴⁵ The hostility of both men was confined to their correspondence with their friends until Hume's death in 1776. The publication in 1777 of Hume's short autobiography and of the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* in 1779, encouraged Hailes, in a curiously oblique way, to indulge in posthumous controversy.

DEMEA VERSUS PHILO

Despite Hume's unequivocal statement to Boswell on his deathbed—a statement which Boswell retailed to both Samuel Johnson and Hailes—and despite the apparent evidence of his published work, the nature of Hume's personal religious convictions have been a matter of debate since the eighteenth century. One basic question is that of sincerity. Beattie, Boswell, Johnson and Hailes all found it possible to question Hume's sincerity in stating his disbelief in futurity. Hailes expressed himself more temperately than the Aberdeen philosopher, James Beattie, but he shared Beattie's belief that Hume's declarations of religious belief must arise from flaws in Hume's moral character, such as vanity and lust for paradox. They both detected in Hume's writings about religion a dishonest ambiguity, and the skilfully drawn picture of a virtuous and amiable man to be found in *My own life* and Adam Smith's *Letter* frustrated and angered both men.

The posthumous publication of the *Dialogues concerning natural religion* further disturbed the Christian moderates. Leaving open, as the *Dialogues* seem to do, the question as to whether Cleanthes or Philo is victorious in the debate, and the further question whether Philo or Cleanthes, or both of them, is the voice of Hume, did not, in the minds of the orthodox, clear Hume of the charge of making Demea the "fall guy" in the debate. They objected to the rhetorical strategy whereby Hume pretended that a first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian was a philosophic scepticism, and yet, at one and the same time, allowed to Philo conventional, prudent and insincere statements of religious belief. Demea, the declared Christian, was made to seem foolish in believing that Philo was on his side in asserting the incomprehensibility of God. Demea, who is given no talent for religious dialectic, and who believes in "a priori" proofs of the existence of God, is dramatically conceived as stupid and irrational.⁴⁶ He is only allowed to present views which Hume wishes to dismiss out of hand. Cleanthes, the deist, who is arguing for an intelligent creator, and not for Christian revelation, is given much fuller and fairer treatment, even though Hume wishes to attack the Argument from Design. Even in that attack, Hume seemed to admit that there is some degree of probability in the hypothesis of a creative intelligence, although flatly denying that this intelligence is of the kind that Christians say it is, or that it has any of the moral attributes associated with the Christian God. Hume's view—that the Argument from Design is not a rational base from which one could commend Christianity to the reasonable man—was destructive of the position that Christian belief is reasonable, if dissociated from the wilder kinds of Christian enthusiasm—a position which Hailes and most other Scottish moderates held.⁴⁷

The moderates were further puzzled by what they saw either as inconsistencies or dishonesty in the whole range of Hume's writings on religious belief. The anti-Christian thrusts of the argument in "Of miracles" and the

Natural history of religion are unmistakeable. Hume, however, begins the *Natural history of religion* by saying that he is discussing the origins of religion in human nature, and goes on to assert that these origins are superstitious and polytheistic. He denies that he is discussing the relationship of belief and reason, and piously asserts at intervals that no one is denying that “the whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author”.⁴⁸ Intelligent Christians like Hailes saw, as I have already indicated, such statements as being either extraordinarily inconsistent with Hume’s basic positions, or simply dishonest cover. I do not believe that the more intelligent Christian moderates simply failed to see the “irony” of Hume’s techniques of argument. Hailes used irony extensively when he was attacking “legendary” historians, or satirising the naïveté of the compilers of saints’ lives, or questioning the historical scholarship of Gibbon and could, presumably, recognise it in the writings of others. In matters of fundamental religious importance, however, Hailes found Hume’s technique either disingenuous or dishonest.

The ambiguity of Philo’s position in Part XII of the *Dialogues* raises in an acute form the question of Philo’s honesty when he says: “no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the divine being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the explicable contrivance and artifice of nature. A purpose, an intention, or design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it.”⁴⁹ Philo goes on to say that “the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence.” Price⁵⁰ firmly believes that the ostensible professions of piety are strategic, and that the apparent concession to Cleanthes is a device to satirize the student Pamphilus, who awards the ultimate victory to Cleanthes. Penelhum believes that Philo’s agnosticism, or general scepticism, is modified to a limited degree, and that Hume is admitting “that a belief in a rational design is something to which human nature is universally prone, and which cannot be dislodged by sceptical argument.”⁵¹

Hailes would not have been particularly interested in this debate. Whether Hume was a convinced atheist or a modified “sceptic” was irrelevant to a believer of his kind. He saw both positions as destructive of the moderate rational Christianity of which he was an exponent.

Hailes’s own religious views can be extrapolated from the records of his life, friendships and writings. Hailes’s honest, if unphilosophical, belief that no man could possibly be a sceptic if the evidence of Christianity was rightly presented to him, is illustrated by this statement in his “commonplace” book:⁵²

A virtuous man has no reason to disbelieve the existence of God because he has no reason to wish that God does not exist. A vicious man has, and therefore sometimes disbelieves, or endeavours to prevail upon himself to disbelieve. By vicious I mean either luxurious or

high-minded; one who debases his nature by pleasures, or seeks to place it at another station than that which his training and faculties have placed it. The truth of Scriptural Christianity may also be called into question from the like cause, and I am apt to imagine that few sober and humble men who have had sufficient opportunity of seeking Scriptural Christianity fairly represented have been unbelievers. Hitherto I have spoken of things which seem capable of full evidence and which can be fully proved. But the second sort of unbelief has no connection with the passions; he who denies that Jesus is eternal in the same sense that God is eternal has no passion to gratify by such disbelief. The assumption or the affirmation of this tenet affects not his conduct. The belief of it may be termed a metaphysical belief, not a practical. He who disbelieves here, or even doubts, disbelieves or doubts because he has the misfortune of not seeing sufficient evidence for it in Scripture. Such a man ought to be treated with much patience, for he has no temptation to lead him into unbelief.

The parallelism of the above to Hailes's comments to Boswell, quoted earlier, confirms the psychological difficulty that Hailes had in coping with all shades of scepticism. He also objected strongly, as his letters to English clergymen show, to the anti-clericalism of Hume's *History* and other writings.

In his public controversy with Gibbon, Hailes opposes the Gibbon of the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the *Decline and Fall* in a tone that is uniformly polite, although occasionally ironic. Indeed, Hailes's clergymen friends, both Presbyterian and Episcopalian, reproached him for not writing publicly against Hume, and accused him of being much too polite to Gibbon in his published writings. Dr Cooke wrote to Hailes thus: "Gibbon is a rogue and ill deserves the candor and tenderness with which your Goodness disposes to treat him."⁵³ Sir Henry Moncrieff called Hailes "a learned and successful defender of Christianity in opposition to its ablest and most insidious opponents", and Gibbon himself calls Hailes "a diligent collector and accurate critic", although he also accuses him of the "dry minuteness of a special pleader".⁵⁴ Some modern critics would, I think, grant Hailes his main point in his anti-Gibbon writings, in that he showed that Gibbon purposely confused causes and effects, and gave a biased picture of Early Christianity because of his dislike of revealed religion.

Hailes's correspondence with James Beattie and his friends shows him supporting the Northern champion of Christianity although he had misgivings about some aspects of Beattie's anti-Hume writings. Hailes saw the *Essay on Truth* while it was still in manuscript and criticised the personal nature of Beattie's attacks on Hume: "He (Beattie) knows that he and I differed as to some particular things and that I thought something might have been taken from the edge of his style."⁵⁵ Beattie defended himself against the charge of splenetic humour:

Your Lordship will do me the justice to believe that my design in writing this Essay was not to aim at distinction by affecting a singularity of opinion, nor to indulge in a splenetic humour under the pretence

of vindicating truth. I am fully convinced that my principles are true and that those of my antagonist are absurd and impious. . . . My design, as I had the honour previously to mention to your Lordship, was not only to confute the principles of Scepticism but also, if possible, to render them contemptible and odious. This has given a keenness to many of my expressions, which will, I believe, be very generally misrepresented and misunderstood.⁵⁴

The dispassionate and scholarly manner of Hailes's replies to Gibbon has stood the test of time much better than Beattie's scurrility. Two other aspects of Hailes's Christianity should be mentioned. Firstly, he dissociated himself strongly from the "enthusiastic" Presbyterianism of 17th and 18th century Scotland, and mirrored modern ecumenicism in his attitude towards Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism: "For my own part, I do not consider it a matter of much moment in which of the two ways God is worshipped, provided that he is worshipped. The difference in the rites being, in my poor opinion, very inconsiderable. Perhaps I do not totally approve of either, but what then?"⁵⁷ Hailes was firmly of the opinion that the eighteenth century was "not a season for internal controversy, while Moses and Jesus Christ, and even the *first cause*, are assailed with a boldness which will astonish the nineteenth century, should it prove more virtuous and learned than the eighteenth"⁵⁸ Secondly, he showed considerable scepticism about Catholic miracles.⁵⁹

Hailes's final comment on Hume was a singularly ineffective one. He translated Hume's *My own life* into Latin prose and Adam Smith's *Letter* into Latin verse, his facility in Latin composition being largely a result of his education at Eton. His purpose was satirical, and he hoped that his translations would make clear to non-English scholars on the European continent what he regarded as the self-evident nature of Hume's vanity, and the exaggerated nature of Hume's intimates' high regard for Hume's virtuous personality. Even Hailes's friends in holy orders mistook his purpose. His former teacher, William Cooke of Eton, wrote: "You rather surprise me a little that you devote so much of your valuable thoughts to Mr. Hume's memory, but I satisfy myself that you have your reasons, no doubt, though I do not fathom them."⁶⁰ Bishop Hurd doubted whether the irony would be taken. Bishop Butler of Oxford wrote:

I was highly amused to see the vanity of a professional philosopher, and shall not fail to transmit the copies you have ordered to my house in town, to a professor at Gottingen and to another at Helmstadt, which is as far as I can go towards celebrating the fame of the original author. It hurts me to observe in the writings of men of genius in Germany, how much he (Hume) is esteemed among them. They are prepossessed in favour of anything from England, and some of them are not disinclined to his principles. The latter will, I fear, dispose them to forgive his Vanity, as party men are not apt to judge candidly of their adherents.⁶¹

In view of contemporary bewilderment at Hailes's supposed aims in this anonymous publication, it is hardly surprising that the purpose of these translations has been, in modern times, either misunderstood or completely forgotten.

In conclusion, it is perhaps worth remembering that Hailes was a much more effective exponent of the desirability of Christianity in the practical actions of his life, than he was as a controversialist. His writings against Gibbon are his only work of any value in the field of religious controversy. His other controversial publications were either too obscure for their purpose, and thus ineffective, or much too limited in their distribution to have any noticeable effect. His two chief services to Scottish culture were his historical writings about Scotland, which are too large a field to comment on in a short paper, and the standards of integrity and Christian humanity which he gave to the Scottish law courts at a time when neither quality was conspicuous by its presence.

Hume's reputation as an original philosopher has rightly and inevitably survived the pinpricks of Hailes and his religious correspondents. They were incredibly wrong in denying him philosophical genius. They were right in assuming that his work was ultimately anti-Christian. Mossner said in an early paper on Hume's personality: "the curious and intimate fusion in Hume of the intellectual hero and the pragmatist man of the world is what properly constitutes the essential paradox and perpetual enigma of his character."⁶² Hume's relationships with intelligent, convinced Christians like Lord Hailes is an instructive element in attempting to solve that enigma.⁶³

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NOTES

¹ Sir Walter Scott, *The Lord of the Isles* (Edinburgh: 1815), Advertisement. A fuller example of Scott's enthusiasm for Hailes's merits as a Scottish historian can be found in his review of Ritson's *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts and Scots* in the *Quarterly Review*, July, 1829, pp. 127-30.

² There is an extended account of Hailes's attitudes towards all three in the present writer's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, "Lord Hailes. A study", St. Andrews, 1954.

³ Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Austin: 1954); *The Forgotten Hume. Le bon David* (New York: 1943). The first of these is referred to in subsequent footnotes as Mossner's *Life*.

⁴ The best guide to this writing is *English Literature, 1660-1800*, the annual bibliography in *Philological Quarterly*.

⁵ I. S. Ross, *Lord Kames and the Scotland of his Day* (Oxford: 1972); A. E. McGuinness, *Henry Home, Lord Kames* (New York: 1970).

⁶ E. L. Cloyd, *James Burnett, Lord Monboddo* (Oxford: 1972).

⁷ S. T. McCloy, *Gibbon's Antagonism to Christianity* (London: 1933), pp. 208-12.

⁸ See *Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes*, ed. A. F. Falconer (Baton Rouge: 1954).

* *Ancient Scottish Poems. Published from the MS of George Bannatyne, MDLXVIII* (Edinburgh: 1770).

¹⁰ Adam Smith's *Letter* is reprinted in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig (Oxford: 1932) II, 450-2. Subsequently referred to as *Letters*.

¹¹ H. G. Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century* (London: 1908), pp. 198-202. Entertaining but inaccurate.

¹² W. F. Gray, *Some Old Scots Judges* (Edinburgh: 1914), pp. 123-50. Erratic and misleading.

¹³ E. C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, Appendix I, pp. 620-22.

¹⁴ Alexander Carlyle, *The Autobiography of Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk*, ed. J. H. Burton (London: 1910), p. 218.

¹⁵ Hume's *My Own Life*. Cf. Mossner's *Life*, p. 611

¹⁶ Mossner's *Life*, p. 611.

¹⁷ Mossner's *Life*, p. 615.

¹⁸ Yale MSS. Letter to James Boswell, 28 July, 1763. I am indebted to the Yale Boswell Committee and to the McGraw-Hill Book Company for permission to quote from this letter and from Hailes's letter to Boswell 16 August, 1776. Catalogue nos. C1428, C1461.

¹⁹ *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, edd. G. Scott and F. Pottle (New York: 1928-34) XII, 227-32.

²⁰ Newhailes MSS. Microfilms. NLS. 458-460. I am grateful to the Trustees of the estate of the late Sir Mark Dalrymple for permission to quote from the Newhailes MSS, and to the staff of the National Library of Scotland for arranging access to the microfilms.

²¹ An excellent account of the membership and activities of the Select Society is to be found in R. L. Emerson, "The Social Composition of Enlightened Scotland: the Select Society of Edinburgh, 1754-1764", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. T. Besterman, Vol. 114, 291-329.

²² Minutes of the Select Society. NLS. MSS.

²³ *Letters* I, 219.

²⁴ *Letters* I, 220.

²⁵ Newhailes MSS. Transcript provided to me by A. G. Hoover.

²⁶ Dempster was also a member of the Select Society. See *Letters of George Dempster to Sir Adam Fergusson*, ed. James Fergusson (London: 1934), p. 24.

²⁷ Minutes of Select Society, 5 February, 1760. See also Mossner's *Life*, pp. 245, 572.

²⁸ Cf. Mossner's *Life*, pp. 235, 239 and 626.

²⁹ Boswell MSS, Yale. C1461.

³⁰ *Letters* I, 174-5.

³¹ *Letters* I, 175-6.

³² *Letters* I, 180-9.

³³ Cf. Mossner's *Life*, p. 251.

³⁴ *Letters* I, 164-7.

³⁵ Cf. Mossner's *Life*, pp. 353-5, and J. H. Burton, *Life and correspondence of David Hume* (Edinburgh: 1846).

³⁶ Hume Papers. Royal Society of Edinburgh.

³⁷ Mossner's *Life*, p. 253.

³⁸ Calvinist association of French literature with licentiousness and irreligion can be amply demonstrated from contemporary journals, reviews and letters.

³⁹ *Letters* I, 212.

⁴⁰ *Ancient Scottish Poems*. Preface, pp. vi-vii.

⁴¹ *Letters* I, 167.

⁴² NLS MSS.

⁴³ *Letters* II, 64.

⁴⁴ B M. 4304. Birch MSS. Charles II said of Vossius that he believed anything but the Bible.

⁴⁵ B.M. Add. MSS. 35,606 : 35,607.

⁴⁶ I am indebted to some degree here to M. Morrisroe, Jnr., "Characterisations as rhetorical device in Hume's *Dialogues concerning natural religion*" in *Enlightenment Essays* 1(2), 95-107.

⁴⁷ What I say here has been affected by reading T. Penelhum, *Hume* (London: 1975), pp 163-96.

⁴⁸ Cf. Penelhum, *Hume*, p. 172.

⁴⁹ *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. N. Kemp Smith (New York. n.d.), p. 214.

⁵⁰ J. V. Price, *The Ironic Hume* (Austin: 1965), pp. 127-42.

⁵¹ Penelhum, *Hume*, p. 193.

⁵² Newhailes MSS. 460.

⁵³ Newhailes MSS. 101.

⁵⁴ *Memoirs*, ed. G. B. Hill (London: 1900).

⁵⁵ Beattie MSS., Aberdeen University Library. I am indebted to Aberdeen University Library for permission to quote from the Beattie Papers.

⁵⁶ Beattie to Hailes, 3 September, 1767. Newhailes MSS. 22.

⁵⁷ Hailes to Boswell. Yale MSS.

⁵⁸ *An inquiry into the secondary causes which Mr. Gibbon has assigned for the rapid growth of Christianity* (Edinburgh: 1786), p. 190.

⁵⁹ Hailes's anti-Catholicism can be seen chiefly in his plans for a book entitled *Doctrines of the Church of Rome proved by miracles*, a satirical work which never came to fruition.

⁶⁰ Letter, Cooke to Hailes. June, 1788, Newhailes MSS.

⁶¹ Letter, Butler to Hailes. Sept, 28, 1787. Newhailes MSS.

⁶² E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume" in *Mind* 14 (1936), 334-49.

⁶³ A first version of this paper was presented to the Scottish Studies section of the American Society for 18th-Century Studies at Charlottesville in April, 1976.