

# Dorset Radicalism Re-Visited: George Loveless makes trouble

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George Loveless, the leader of the group of men commonly known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, has an assured place in popular history, but his writings, as has been noted, are ‘almost totally ignored’.<sup>1</sup> They have been given little if any critical examination, and no modern annotated editions have been attempted of the two major pamphlets, *The Victims of Whiggery* (1837) and *The Church Shown Up* (1838).<sup>2</sup> The historical accounts of the Dorchester Labourers commonly place at their centre a dramatic rendition of the Loveless biography in which he is presented as the autodidact, the Methodist, and the working man of principle who stood his ground against a prejudicial establishment. In turn, these elements support the dominant narratives of ‘Tolpuddle’: the birth of agricultural trade unionism, Methodism under pressure, and secular martyrdom. In so far as Loveless’s writings support these accounts (and it is really only *The Victims of Whiggery* that has a role here as the primary source of the Loveless biography) they are referenced, but not

- 1 T. Scriven, *Activism and the Everyday: The Practices of Radical Working-Class Politics, 1830–1842*, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2012, p. 62. This article owes much to Tom Scriven’s pioneering research, both here and in T. Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath in Dorset, 1830–1842’, *History Workshop Journal* 82 (July, 2016), 1–23. ‘Almost totally ignored’ is an accurate summary, Scriven’s doctorate and 2016 article being the exceptions, as the first commentaries to acknowledge the weight and maturity of Loveless’ writing. Elsewhere, *The Victims of Whiggery* is cited selectively in the telling of the Tolpuddle story, and used only as a source of the events and *The Church Shown Up* is barely mentioned.
- 2 Modern reprints are available from TUC publications, as follows: G. Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery* (Tolpuddle Martyrs Memorial Trust, 2005); *The Church Shown Up* (Tolpuddle Martyrs Memorial Trust, 2005). Quotations from *The Victims of Whiggery* are taken from the 1837 second edition of the pamphlet, and those from *The Church Shown Up* are taken from the first edition of 1838.

always accurately. Beyond this biographical function the pamphlets scarcely figure in the major narratives of the Tolpuddle event, and there is no recognition of the part they played in the liberal and radical publishing ferment that assailed the pressurised Whig government of the late 1830s. My purpose here is to retrieve Loveless's writings from their biographical constraints, primarily through an investigation of Loveless's pamphlet, *The Church Shown Up* (1838). This powerful piece of writing, I will argue, has much to reveal about Loveless's politics, his intellectual circle, and his participation in London radical pamphleteering.

We might account for the general lack of interest in Loveless's writings by acknowledging that primary sources and contextual documents are scarce, or as yet, undiscovered. There are no available manuscripts of Loveless's work, and barely any material history of their publication in the form of diaries or correspondence. Quite simply, we do not know how they were produced, and much has been left to conjecture, there being no primary forms of evidence on which to rely. Further, prior to the year of the trial (1834), we know very little about the lives of the men who then became known as the Dorchester Labourers, and latterly, the Tolpuddle Martyrs. We know that the Loveless and Standfield families were members of the first congregation of Wesleyan Methodists in the Dorset village of Tolpuddle in 1810, when Thomas Loveless's house was permitted to be used as a place of worship under Dissenters' Licence. There is clear and substantial evidence that some of the labourers built the unique first Tolpuddle Methodist Chapel, and that we know that five of the six were of the congregation.<sup>3</sup> We also know that when the Chapel was opened in 1818, there was a riot precipitated by reactionary opposition to the spread of Methodism. A little later there is evidence of further anti-Methodist prejudice in 1824, although the details are vague. We know that both George and James Loveless were listed on the Weymouth circuit plan for Wesleyan preachers for November 1829 to March 1830. Apart from these, there are few material traces of George Loveless before 1834, and of his formative years, we know little. Of course between 1834 and 1842 Loveless was a spectacularly famous national figure, after which he dropped out of the public eye, emigrating to Canada in 1844, where

3 For details and context see Jo Cox, with John Thorp and Roger Thorne, *Extract from a Conservation Statement for the former Chapel, Tolpuddle for the Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust*, 2015, Section 2.4 available at <https://tolpuddleoldchapeltrust.org> Alongside Scriven's work, this is the best account of the Methodist society in Tolpuddle in the formative years.

he lived out the rest of his life in obscurity.<sup>4</sup> Any serious investigation of the Tolpuddle story, and of George Loveless in particular, begins with a large, intriguing gap.

Given this lack of a substantial historical trace of the Dorchester labourers prior to 1834, it is unsurprising that for the most part the histories of Tolpuddle consistently adhere to a version of Loveless which originates in the tactful self-presentation of his first pamphlet, *The Victims of Whiggery* (1837), written almost immediately he returned to England following his pardon, and the contemporary account of Loveless given in a letter published in the *Morning Chronicle* (1834).<sup>5</sup> The pamphlet consists largely of Loveless's narrative of his experience between 1830 and 1837, although the first four years are covered briskly in a sparsely detailed account of the labourers' petitioning for wage rises in 1830–1 and the subsequent forming of an agricultural union, the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers (FSAL). The arrest, the trial and sentencing, the transportation and experience of Tasmania are given more detailed attention, and the pamphlet concludes with a vigorous call for the working man to show solidarity and resistance in opposing the 'money-mongering taskmasters', and to rally around the flag of liberty.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of this final section (to which I will return) the pamphlet consists almost entirely of narrative, and it represents Loveless as restrained, honest, and true to his political principles of justice and the rights of the labourer. The tone is set in the opening paragraph:

- 4 The anti-Methodist riot at the opening of the Chapel on October 13 1818 was reported in the *Salisbury Journal* and the *Bath Chronicle*, and subsequently in the *London Morning Chronicle* and the *Manchester Mercury*, the same text being used in all the reports. This is available in Cox (2015) p.56, as too is the Weymouth Circuit Plan for Wesleyan Preachers, 1829–30 (p.30). Both are also reproduced in A. Gallop, *Six for the Tolpuddle Martyrs* (2017), p. 21, p. 58. Much has been made of the Circuit Plan in describing Loveless's Methodism, and it is generally and reasonably assumed that he was active on the Wesleyan circuit beyond these years, but there is no hard evidence of this. The anti-Methodist activity of 1824 in Tolpuddle is alluded to by Loveless in *The Victims of Whiggery* (p. 11) where he states 'the years 1824–5 are not forgotten and many a curious tale might be told of men that were persecuted, banished and not allowed to have employ if they entered the Wesleyan Chapel at Tolpuddle. But enough of this subject, it is still on record.'
- 5 The letter was published on April 2 1834 and signed 'A Wesleyan' (thought to be George Romaine). It apparently refers to the persecution Loveless describes above, or closely related matters (see Gallop, p. 55 for further details).
- 6 Later editions of *The Victims of Whiggery* included an additional account of the trial itself, gleaned from the newspaper reports of the trial in *The Times* and the *Dorsetshire County Chronicle*.

I shall not attempt to give the subject an unfair colouring; but simply narrate the facts, as they took place; mentioning sometimes the reflections of my own mind at the time those facts occurred. It will, however, first be necessary to state what led me to become a member of the society which, by the idle and wealthy, has been denounced as illegal and injurious; but which then, as now, appeared to me to be established on just and equitable principles.<sup>7</sup>

And indeed, Loveless does ‘narrate the facts’, at times in the form of a dispassionate reportage, most particularly in his description of the trial, the system of transportation, its punitive regimes, and the account of Tasmania. An extraordinary tonal restraint attributes a distanced and anthropological objectivity to his narrative, and in turn, these qualities lend authenticity to the dramatized encounters in which Loveless emerges as a steadfast speaker of truth to power, such as the relation of his interchanges with the Chaplain in Dorchester jail, or Thomas Mason, the examining magistrate in Hobart.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘character’ of George Loveless that has accumulated in the twentieth-century historical accounts and beyond is largely an embroidered version of this self-dramatisation. Walter Citrine’s introduction to the TUC commemorative volume, *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle*, 1834–1934, crafted the template:

By stern self-denial he had scraped together enough money to acquire a small collection of books, and had equipped himself with an education that distinguished him among his fellows. Respected by all who knew him, he was a man of great natural ability and strength of character.<sup>9</sup>

This is closely echoed in the later account by Joyce Marlow:

Loveless had both the independence and strength of character that led him on the route to Methodism ... Of good natural intelligence, possessed of application and powers of concentration, he had taught

7 *Victims of Whiggery*, p. 5.

8 When the Labourers were committed to Dorchester Jail to await trial, Loveless told the prison chaplain that one way to provide a living wage to working men might be to cut the pay of those in the Church – ‘gentlemen wearing the clerical livery, like himself, might do with a little less salary.’ When interrogated by Thomas Mason, the examining magistrate, and George Arthur, the governor in the prisoners’ barracks in Hobart, Loveless boldly denied that he did not break the law and insisted that it was not possible for men to live honestly on the agricultural wage, *Victims of Whiggery*, p. 7, pp. 12–13.

9 W. Citrine (ed.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834–1934* (1934), p. 7.

himself to read and write in the evenings after long, hard hours labouring in the fields. Over the years, despite the appallingly low agricultural wages, he had managed to acquire a small theological library<sup>10</sup>

The tropes of Tolpuddle recur regularly in popular accounts and others, representing the labourers as ‘quiet, resolute, steadfast products of the English countryside’: family-centred, sturdy and honest rustics, and pious followers of the faith.<sup>11</sup> Tolpuddle itself is portrayed as a peaceful and innocent backwater, its surrounding fields the neat and ‘trim’ evidence of regular industry.<sup>12</sup> The Tolpuddle chroniclers have taken Loveless at his word, particularly in relation to his quietude, his piety, and his high regard for the law of the land, understood to be consistent with the tenets of Wesleyanism. The most recent full-length study continues to propose a romantic *sui generis* notion of Loveless based on his exceptionality, and in which he is conceived as the product of innocent ruralism ‘the peaceful ploughman’, a man who was ‘no trouble-maker’.<sup>13</sup>

Loveless’s Methodism is another important element of his representation in the narrative accounts, although it should be noted that Citrine’s volume plays down the role of religious dissent in the Loveless story (there is only one indexed reference to Methodism). Other writers in the romantic tradition have compensated for this by greatly exaggerating Loveless’s piety. Owen Rattenbury’s *Flame of Freedom* (1931), for instance, is a fancifully dramatized account, a *parti pris* for independent Methodism and the working man, in which

10 J. Marlow, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* (St Albans, 1974) pp.13–14 (first published London 1971). Marlow’s account, which has many virtues, was the first thoroughly investigative account of Tolpuddle.

11 Citrine, p. 92. The accounts of the Martyrs also regularly reference their family ties. Citrine begins by dramatizing the morning of Loveless’s arrest by adding the detail of him ‘gently closing the door of his little cottage so as not to awaken the still sleeping children’ (p. 1); a detail replicated by Gallop (p. xii). Marlow simply notes that ‘behind him in the cottage Loveless left his wife, Elizabeth, and three children.’ (p. 11).

12 Citrine’s account of the labourers’ return to England following their pardons makes much of the Dorset idyll, noting that ‘surely no country in the world could appear so pleasant as the trim Dorset fields and hedgerows on that spring morning’ (p. 86); Gallop repeats this almost verbatim (p. 202), and also echoes Marlow’s sentimental account of Loveless returning to the village green to stand under the sycamore tree (Marlow, p. 215; Gallop, p. 195).

13 Gallop, p. 54, p. xii.

all of Loveless's actions are read as demonstrations of his faith.<sup>14</sup> Joyce Marlow takes a very different line, but has no doubt about the centrality of his Methodism with her preclusive and somewhat hasty assertion that 'the most important thing to be said about Loveless was that he was a Methodist ... Loveless had both the independence and strength of character that led him on the route to Methodism, then to ask questions and finally into action.'<sup>15</sup> That Loveless's Methodism is important is beyond doubt, but this is an overstatement, and it sits awkwardly alongside Loveless's disillusion with the Methodist Conference that is expressed in *The Church Shown Up*, as I will show.

Unsurprisingly, E.P. Thompson was troubled by the Loveless image, which he evidently thought loomed too large over the inter-relationships of Methodism and early Trade Unionism:

We might suppose, from some popular accounts, that Methodism was no more than a nursing-ground for Radical and trade union organizers, all formed in the image of the Tolpuddle martyr, George Loveless, with his 'small theological library' and his forthright independence. The matter is a great deal more complex.<sup>16</sup>

Thompson's concern is that the 'image of the Tolpuddle martyr' carries with it a linear simplification of cause and effect, and we can see this clearly in some of the accounts. Following Thompson's scepticism about the Loveless 'image', my preference is to resist the strong narrative pull that gives priority to 'strength of character' and to follow those historians who have diminished the notion of Tolpuddle's exceptionalism by documenting the wider context and precedents for the Dorchester Labourers' plight and prosecution, while also noting Loveless's associations with radical groups, trade unionists and later, Chartism.<sup>17</sup> To examine Loveless's writings as primary sources offers an alternative but complementary disruption to the romantic approach: these texts grant access to part of the story that is, as yet, largely untold.

To be clear, there can be no doubt about Loveless's courage and fortitude: there is ample evidence in the formal records of the trial

14 O. Rattenbury, *Flame of Freedom: The Romantic Story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs* (1931)

15 Marlow p. 12 and p. 13.

16 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968), p. 45.

17 R. Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of English Agrarian Labour History, 1780–1850' in J. Rule (ed.), *British Trade Unionism, 1750–1850: The Formative Years*, (London and New York, 1988); C. Griffin, 'The Culture of Combination: Solidarities and Collective Action before Tolpuddle', *Historical Journal* 58:2 (2015), pp.443–480, and Scriven, 2012, 2016.

proceedings of these qualities. Similarly, the depositions to the court of his honesty and upright character are testimony to his good standing in the local community. Undoubtedly, he and his companions were unjustly treated and punitively sentenced. But the innocence inherent in this part of the history, together with the commitment to his faith, can too easily bleed into ‘innocent’ characterisations that diminish or occlude the vitality and sophistication of the radical politics which are revealed in his writings: in the concluding paragraphs of *The Victims of Whiggery* in an early stage of development; in *The Church Shown Up*, as sustained, aggressive, and rhetorically charged arguments for democracy, for the disestablishment of the Church, for peace, and for what we would now call human rights. Loveless was no innocent: this is a pamphlet strategically designed to cause trouble.

Sir James Frampton, the initiator of the prosecution against the labourers, had few doubts about Loveless as a trouble-maker. In his 1834 correspondence with Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, he provides an account (taken from a tenant farmer, one of his informants) of the earlier disturbances of 1830 in Tolpuddle. Here, the farmer relates how he confronted a pre-dawn assembly of labourers which included James and George Loveless, and enquired if any of his own men were there. He alleges Loveless replied that ‘some of them are here and we have sent for the rest’, whereupon the farmer tried to quell the crowd by assuring them that if they dispersed quietly they ‘should have the same pay as was agreed to be given in other parishes.’ Loveless, it is alleged, then warned that ‘the first man who started should have his head cracked.’ And James Loveless, the farmer states, ‘appeared much dissatisfied and tried to persuade the men to go and join the Mob which had assembled at Piddletown’.<sup>18</sup> In another letter (29 March 1834) he describes the Lovelesses as ‘very active in the riots of 1830.’ Loveless refutes these allegations in *The Victims of Whiggery*, where he asserts that he was not a rioter, and alleges that such accusations are a malevolent consequence of prejudice against his faith.<sup>19</sup>

Frampton, predictably, is given little credence in the Loveless hagiography. There is no doubt that he was a keen opponent of democracy, dissent and labourers’ rights, whose vengeance against the Tolpuddle families extended so far as to ensure that the wives’

18 Citrine, p. 183 (Frampton to Melbourne, April 2, 1834). Citrine reprints the Frampton-Melbourne correspondence which chronicles Frampton’s desperate attempts to close down the FSAL and bring the labourers to prosecution. All quotations from this correspondence are sourced from Citrine.

19 Citrine, p. 181; *Victims of Whiggery*, pp. 10–11

claims for parish relief after the transportation were bluntly refused. His relentless determination to condemn the labourers was the prime source of the legal snare used to proclaim them guilty. His role in arranging the weighting of the trial proceedings and the composition of the juries cannot be underestimated; his conniving to ensure, once the transportation had taken place, that those labourers who had joined the FSAL should not be employed whereas those who had refused to join would be given an increased wage is testimony to the extent and perversity of his malice. But to deny that he knew his man may be a mistake. He saw Loveless as a prime mover in the discontent which threatened the 'satisfaction' of the 'Higher classes', and it is Frampton's view, rather than that of the Tolpuddle chroniclers, that squares best with the pugnacious prose that characterises *The Church Shown Up* and which is given some precedent in the milder – but still strident – Painite proclamation in *The Victims of Whiggery*:<sup>20</sup>

I believe that nothing will be done to relieve the distress of the working classes, unless they take it into their own hands; with these views I left England, and with these views I am returned ... Nothing but union will or can ever accomplish the great and important object, namely, the salvation of the world. Let the producers of wealth firmly and peaceably unite their energies and what can withstand them?<sup>21</sup>

Both pamphlets show that George Loveless knew how to start a row and how to finish one too. From the riot that attended the opening of the Tolpuddle Methodist Chapel in 1818, through the mysterious and apparently malevolent inter-denominational strife in Tolpuddle in 1824, to the run of incendiary attacks in south Dorset between 1828 and 1834 (which led Hobsbawm and Rudé to speculate, albeit most warily, about the connections between the Swing riots and Tolpuddle) George Loveless would have known that his struggle for his faith and his politics was not one to be fought politely.<sup>22</sup> The world in which he

20 When Frampton wrote to Lord Melbourne (then Home Secretary) about the sentence of transportation, he stated that it had 'given the greatest satisfaction to all of the Higher classes in this Country' (Frampton to Melbourne, March 29 1834), Citrine, p. 182.

21 *Victims of Whiggery*, p. 26.

22 'It is tempting to think that the persistent fires in Piddletrenthide (Dorset) in 1828, 1834, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1841 and 1843 – have some relation to the events which brought six respectable labourers into history as the Tolpuddle martyrs, but the temptation must be resisted ... It would be unwise to read into such bare facts more than may be in them, but local historians might perhaps follow them up.'



lived was far from a quiet rural backwater with nothing going on apart from a sermon or two under the sycamore tree, but a place of radical unrest and growing tensions between powerful and dissonant agencies: the established Church and Dissent; the economic crises of agricultural labour and production which pitted landowners, tenant farmers and labourers into relations of escalating fractiousness; the crumbling system of parish relief that was of massive contention in the years leading up to the Poor Law amendment Act of 1834 and beyond; the disillusion following the Reform Act of 1832 which led to the Whigs being discredited as the ‘friends of the people’ (the ‘whiggery’ evoked in Loveless’s first pamphlet). These are the constituent elements of George Loveless’s world and the crucible of his writing, and they were as potent in South Dorset as in a great many parts of England, not least because of the routes of transport and communication which Tom Scriven has shown made this region well-connected with London, and gave easy passage to the distribution of newspapers, information and radical pamphleteering in Dorset.<sup>23</sup> James Frampton also was highly aware of this, and offers corroborative evidence. Concerned about the unionisation being encouraged by ‘communications from Strangers who have passed thro’ the Villages at different times’ he could see this world with the sharp clarity that comes to one whose privilege is gravely threatened, and in 1834, at the time of the arrests, he was panicking:

The Justices have long had information that nightly meetings have been held (I believe twice a week) in the house of this George Romane, who I am told is a Methodist Preacher as are also the two Lovelesses, but his house is situated on a very wide heath with only a few cottages near it ... and altho’ we have had repeated information that from twenty to thirty persons at least pass at a time through Bere and also come from other villages into which it has extended rapidly to this house to attend these meetings, the house is so surrounded by persons on the watch that it has been impossible for us to send anybody to procure evidence of what is going on within it. ... The Persons who attend these meetings have become much more bold of late and instead of going secretly and quietly, go together in bodies

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E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 327. See Scriven (2016) on this same extract for a powerful argument about the relations between Swing and the union activities of 1834.

<sup>23</sup> See Scriven (2012), Chapter 1, and especially pp. 36–40 for details on the turnpike routes and mail coach frequency.

talking loudly without restraint, and I am told that on the night of Tuesday, February 25th (the day on which the six men were committed for further examination), an extraordinary meeting was called together on Bere Heath by the Sound of a Horn.<sup>24</sup>

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*The Church Shown Up in a Letter to the Rev. Henry Walter, Vicar of Hazelbury Bryant, Dorsetshire* is a very different piece of writing to the Tolpuddle pamphlets that preceded it. It contains no autobiography to speak of, and is fiercely polemical from start to finish, a deeply politicised piece of sustained and revolutionary anti-clericalism, and a contribution to the swell of discontent held by dissenting groups of many kinds following the failure of the radical and liberal elements both inside and outside parliament to meet the challenges of Church reform or to deal with the demands for disestablishment. The pamphlet originated in a complaint made to the President of the Methodist Conference (Edmund Grindrod) by Henry Walter, the Anglican priest of Hazelbury Bryan, about George Loveless's giving an address in his village in late 1837.<sup>25</sup> Loveless chose to respond by way of publishing a vigorous defence of his conduct as an open letter pamphlet. Some commentators have assumed that the pamphlet is a Methodist tract, originating in Loveless's duties on the circuit ministry.<sup>26</sup> This is extremely unlikely: as an ex-convict and a highly politicised figure of

24 Frampton to Melbourne, March 5 1824. Citrine, p. 176.

25 Henry Walter was deeply involved with agricultural labour and the arguments around poor relief. He was attacked by Francis Yeatman in 1833 who accused him of undermining the magistrates administering poor relief in his parish, and in 1823 he criticised the Blandford magistrates for endorsing practices that in his view worsened the lot of the poor. An advocate of the Speenhamland system, or some equivalent version, he experimented with co-operative allotment schemes in his own parish. See H. Walter, *A Letter to the Reverend H. F. Yeatman* (London, 1833)

26 For example see Marlow, p. 222 for the claim that the pamphlet is 'the essence of George Loveless' which 'shows how completely [he] believed in, and drew his strength from, his Methodism', and Gallop's assertion that he was 'allocated to lead a service at Hazelbury Bryan's Primitive Methodist Chapel' (p. 216). Although it is not impossible that Loveless might have been leaning towards the Primitive Methodists at this time, I can find no evidence that he was 'allocated' this task, and – more significantly – no evidence that there was a Primitive Methodist Chapel in Hazelbury Bryan until some years later, when a Chapel, or land for a Chapel, was bought in 1847. The current Primitive Methodist Chapel dates from 1863. I am grateful to the Dr Tim Macquiban and his colleagues at Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum for their help with my enquiries about the Primitive Methodists in Hazelbury Bryan, and for the information in n. 28.

national renown he would not have been welcomed back into the fold by the Wesleyans, whatever the blatant injustice of his sentence and the declaration of his pardon. As early as 1831–32, the Conference had forbidden its membership from belonging to ‘associations which are subversive to the principles of true and proper liberty, employing unlawful oaths and threats and force to acquire new members and accomplish purposes which would tend to destroy the very framework of civil society.’<sup>27</sup> The Primitive Methodists, identified as the constituency of Loveless’s audience in Hazelbury Bryan, would also have been an unlikely alternative berth for him, since they too had proscribed the swearing of secret oaths.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, it is clear that by 1838 (and probably by 1834) the Wesleyans wanted nothing to do with George Loveless, and this pamphlet spikily returns their indifference with interest.<sup>29</sup> When confronting Henry Walter about his letter of complaint in the opening passages of *The Church Shown Up*, Loveless writes:

What could be his motive in writing to the President of the Wesleyan Conference concerning one of whom the president most likely knows nothing and perhaps cares as little? Of the President of the Methodist Conference, as a private man, I know nothing, but judging of him from the situation he fills, I think I have nothing to dread from that quarter.

He goes on to assert ‘I have learnt not to pin my faith to the sleeves of presidents, bishops or popes’, indicating thereby that the leaders of Methodism are no more trustworthy than those of Anglicans or Catholics. So it is perfectly clear from the pamphlet itself that George Loveless regards his own position as ‘unconnected’, and this is unsurprising given that at this period under the presidencies of Edmund Grindrod and Jabez Bunting, the Wesleyan conference was much closer to the Anglican Church than it had been for many

27 *Address to the Wesleyan Conference*, 1833, cited in E. Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century* 3 (London, 1961), p. 154.

28 See Gallop citation, n. 26. The *General Minutes* of the Primitive Methodists for 1836 banned preachers from being ‘members of what are called odd fellows, secret orders and such like.’

29 In the welter of public protest following the Labourers’ sentencing, there is no evidence of any representation by the Wesleyan Church. Rattenbury suggests there was support at a personal level, but Marlow rightly shows that there was no conclusive evidence of this. See Marlow p. 127 for further details.

years.<sup>30</sup> And to talk of ‘Methodism’ and ‘Wesleyanism’ in this period is a dangerous generalisation, given the evidence of the splintering of the movement – which had always been subject to considerable local variations – in the 1830s. Such schisms are testimony to the volatile social, theological, and political context into which *The Church Shown Up* was launched.

It is significant that in his major pamphlets Loveless never refers to himself as a Methodist, but as a Dissenter, a more generic, historically resonant and coextensive term which, in both etymological and practical dimensions positions its speaker as anti-establishment, and thereby unites a broad base of dissent against that establishment. At the key moment in *The Victims of Whiggery* where Loveless pins his colours to the mast to explain the relentless persecution he has suffered, he says ‘I am from principle, a Dissenter’ (my emphasis).<sup>31</sup> Such self-identification avoids the position famously declared for Methodism by Jabez Bunting in 1827 when he stated that ‘Methodism is as much opposed to democracy as it is to sin’,<sup>32</sup> and further it has the capacity to collapse the specifics of the present into a historical continuum of Old Dissent, Old Corruption, and the long tradition of Protestant reformism, the tradition in which *The Church Shown Up* consciously seeks to place itself. For *The Church Shown Up* is a sustained attack on ‘priestcraft’, employed here as a revived reformist weapon which achieves two things: it claims the prerogative of the long tradition of Protestant liberty, and simultaneously identifies the current Anglican priesthood as colluding with the state to deceive, to suppress freedom of speech and democracy, and to preserve the clerical benefits of its financial arrangements. Loveless was far from alone in using this long-standing accusation against the Anglican (and originally the Roman Catholic) priesthood. Between 1825 and 1840 there were numerous printed attacks citing ‘priestcraft’ as a form of corruption and deceit, a term which mutated into the Chartists’ preferred terminology of ‘priestianity’ at around the same time.<sup>33</sup>

30 Jabez Bunting was President of the Methodist Conference in 1836, and Edmund Grindrod in 1837. See Thompson, pp. 387–90, for a summary of the nature of Bunting’s influence and control and that of ‘the obnoxious Grindrod.’

31 *Victims of Whiggery*, p. 11. See also Halevy, p. 153, where he states ‘The Wesleyan Methodists had always objected to being classified with the Dissenters.’ This may give a particular inflection to Loveless’s insistent claim that has been missed by most commentators.

32 Cited in Halévy, 154

33 Examples of such pamphlets include Elisha Pechey, *Priestcraft Exhibited* (London, 1828); John Burridge, *Kingcraft and Priestcraft* (London, 1830) Anon, *Alarm! Alarm!*

This alignment with the broad tradition of Protestant radicalism is also announced in the pamphlet's epigraph - 'Give me the liberty to think, to speak, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties' - taken from Milton's *Areopagetica*, a work long and widely regarded as a foundational text of religious liberty based on the principles of free speech. Further clues as to this pamphlet's positioning, and indeed to its making, can also be seen on the title page, and its postscript advertisement. As is well-known, the pamphlet was published on behalf of the Dorchester Committee, but the naming of its publishers is the most telling detail, revealing a potent combination: John Cleave, Henry Hetherington, and James Watson - three of the most successful and tenacious radical pressmen in London, a trio once described as the 'mighty champions of the Unstamped.'<sup>34</sup> Loveless's pamphlet could have had no better means of wide distribution to the working-class readership than that established by these three publishers and their alliance here with Robert Hartwell, the Chair of the Dorchester Committee, the printer of the pamphlet, and a radical publisher in his own right.<sup>35</sup> The evidence strongly suggests that when Loveless sat down to write *The Church Shown Up*, he did so not in order to start an argument with his nominal adversary, the Revd Henry Walter, but to use Walter's interference in Hazelbury Bryan as an example of what was understood in radical quarters to be the presumptuous censorship exercised by the Anglican Church, and to expose this at a national level under the rubric of priestcraft. Further, Loveless's close

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*Priestcraft Detected* (Birmingham, 1831); Henry Hetherington, *Cheap Salvation, or, An Antidote to Priestcraft* (1832); Thomas Hardy of Leicester, *Priestcraft Exposed* (1838); Spencer Walpole, *The People Armed against Priestcraft* (Manchester, 1840).

34 See P. Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A Study in Working-Class Radicalism of the 1830s* (London, 1970), p. 291. Hollis cites this quotation taken from H. Solly's *James Woodford, Carpenter and Chartist* (1881) alongside G.J. Hollyoake's claim that 'the names of Hetherington, Watson, and Cleave "were in the mouths of every news vendor and mechanic in the three kingdoms"' (G. J. Hollyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life* (1892)).

35 The Dorchester Committee, or the 'London Dorchester Committee' was set up in August 1834 to raise money for the Labourers' families, to petition and press for the men to be pardoned and released and to mobilise working-class support for the cause. It originated in the Copenhagen Fields Protest of April 1834, at which around 50,000 (estimates and claims range from 30,000 to 100,000) people protested against the sentences and marched to Parliament to present Melbourne with a petition (which was refused). The 'Victim Fund' made sufficient money to resettle the Labourers first in Essex (1838) and then in London, Ontario (1844). It was chaired by Robert Hartwell, and its members included Henry Hetherington and Effingham Wilson.

connections with Hartwell and with Hetherington (Hetherington had taken a personal interest in the plight of the Labourers' wives after the transportation, visiting Tolpuddle in person to distribute the financial aid collected by the Committee's appeal) opens up the probability that the pamphlet was strategically conceived in partnership with Cleave, Hetherington and Watson in order to maximise its impact, capitalising on Loveless's fame and the victory being claimed for the Labourers. There would have been mutual benefit in such collaboration. Loveless gained a powerful publishing and distribution network to broadcast his humiliation of Walter's arrogance; Cleave, Hetherington and Watson enlisted a celebrated recruit to the cause of anti-clericalism in the 1830s, one of the strongest campaigns of the English radicals in this period, and one to which Hetherington had already contributed with the publication of his own pamphlet of 1832, *Cheap Salvation, or An Antidote to Priestcraft*. Finally, the postscript advertisement on the last page of the *Church Shown Up* is for a book that has an even bigger part to play in the composition of Loveless's text: an abridgement of William Howitt's *Popular History of Priestcraft* 'just published' by John Cleave. Howitt's book conducted an unrelenting attack on the corruption of the Church, as part of his condemnation of priestcraft in the major world religions. Of greater significance to our understanding Loveless's pamphlet however (and unrecognised hitherto) is the fact that around a fifth of *The Church Shown Up* is taken verbatim and unacknowledged from *A Popular History of Priestcraft*, and Howitt's work also exerts its influence in less direct ways.<sup>36</sup> Although it is possible that Loveless had read Howitt, it is perhaps more likely – not least because of his transportation and limited opportunities since his return – that the passages from Howitt were inserted at the instigation of John Cleave (or one of Cleave's associates) whose work on the abridgement would have granted him the necessary familiarity with the text.

*The Church Shown Up* then, is one of many works in the 1820s and 30s determined to discredit the Church and through the Church - most importantly - the State. The prominent foundation for such attacks was John Wade's remarkable *Black Book, or Corruption Unmasked Being an Account of Persons, Places and Sinecures* published in fortnightly serial form initially, and then in three volumes (1820–23). The first three chapters of the consolidated edition are crammed full with factual details about patronage, sinecurism, Church revenues, pluralism, tithing, and also describe instances of the 'rapacious' conduct of the

36 See Appendix 1 for details

clergy and the ridiculing of Anglican liturgy. Almost all these topics figure in Howitt's work, and many of them, partly through Loveless's borrowings from Howitt, make up the spine of the attack on the Church in *The Church Shown Up*. Wade moves on to attack the Crown and its revenues, the Aristocracy, Corporations, Pensions, The House of Commons and much else besides. In its extraordinarily detailed exposure of the financial arrangements of the Church – which in the terms of the present day, reads like a colossally successful Freedom of Information request – it gave precedent to further attacks and provided a template of topics and data through which they could be continued and developed. Republished in 1832, *The Black Book* went through three further editions by 1835, and sold around 50,000 copies.<sup>37</sup> The reverberations of the *Black Book* were still thrumming in the late 30s, providing material and direction for radical critiques such as Loveless's.

Yet for all its damning detail, *The Black Book* is a restrained piece of writing in comparison to Howitt's *Popular History*. First published in 1833 by Effingham Wilson, it went through several editions in the next 13, including two abridged versions in 1834 (one published by Wilson, the other by John Cleave), an enlarged fourth edition in 1834, and a further enlarged fifth edition (also in 1834). Wade's meticulous rendition of fact and figures furnished Howitt with ample precedent for his assault on the Church of England (chapters XV – XX), but Howitt's tone is very different. It is highly rhetorical, vitally argumentative, and closer to the argumentation of the Miltonic tradition.<sup>38</sup> The *Popular History* was a massive success, and by 1838, further popularised by Cleave's cheaper 1834 abridged version and together with the

37 John Wade (1788–1875) was also the editor of *The Gorgon* between 1818 and 1819, and worked closely with Francis Place. E.P. Thompson places him in the utilitarian tradition, and suggests that *The Gorgon* was 'an explicit attempt to effect a junction between Benthamism and working-class experience.' Wade's division of society into the 'parasitic and productive classes' (see Thompson, p. 848) is directly relevant, although not exclusively so, to Loveless's repeated description of the labouring class as the 'producers of wealth', both here and in *The Victims of Whiggery*. Wade's statistics were sometimes used in slightly modified forms in radical pamphlets, such as Hetherington's *Cheap Salvation* (see Hetherington's 'Comparative Tables', pp. 18–19 and Wade's 'Comparative Expense of Church of England', p. 63). The edition of the *Black Book* used in this article is *The Extraordinary Black Book: An Exposition of Abuses in Church and State* (London, 1832)

38 Howitt's epigraph is a lightly amended quotation from Milton's 'Sonnet to Cromwell, 'Help us to save free Gospel from the paw/Of hireling wolves, whose conscience is their maw' (the epigraph inverts Milton's 'gospel' and 'conscience')

continuing currency of Wade's *Black Book*, it had created a well-primed liberal and radical reading audience for anti-clerical writing.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to recognise that although *The Church Shown Up* is not a wholly original work on account of its borrowings, it has its own distinctiveness and its own strengths. It is singularly aggressive and determinedly uncompromising in its adherence to the principles of free speech and the rights of working people. Furthermore, it is a comprehensive and intellectually consistent piece of writing with a powerful developmental structure. It moves quickly from the relatively trivial personal complaint against Henry Walter out into a series of charges against the contemporary church and establishment. From there, it turns to the broad field of political economy to give consideration to the origins and distribution of wealth, property and knowledge. In turn, this develops into the promulgation of a radical theory of democratic rights and the responsibilities of government itself. And throughout, *The Church Shown Up* is strongly charged with rhetorical artistry.

The positioning of the writer in relation to the object of critique is part of this armoury, and Loveless's introduction exemplifies the tactical manipulation which characterised the more sophisticated pamphleteering of the period:

In addressing myself to you I adopt the above [the quotation from *Areopagetica*] as my motto, believing that liberty of conscience is every man's birthright; and as the Almighty Creator of man hath blest me in common with others with thinking and reasoning powers, I consider that I should be abusing those noble powers, were I to be silent at the present time and not to speak out boldly and freely in vindication of truth and justice; that I would be withholding an important obligation I owe to my fellow men; and that in so doing I should reproach my Maker and sin against my own soul.<sup>40</sup>

Not to speak is a withholding of an obligation that is as Christian as it is secular: God's creation of reasoning powers in men – pointedly described here as 'noble' and thereby reclaiming the concept of nobility from rank for rational purpose – requires speaking out as the prime duty embedded in 'birthright': the entitlement to free speech must be exercised. From the start, Loveless asserts the claims in old and

39 Cleave's Abridgement sold at 'One Shilling and Sixpence, in Boards'.

40 G. Loveless, *The Church Shown Up, in a Letter to the Rev. Henry Walter, Vicar of Haselbury Bryant, Dorsetshire* (London, 1838), p. 3. All subsequent quotations from this work are from this edition and page numbers follow in brackets.



new dissent of an unmediated relation between God, the word of God, and man that compels the Dissenter to speak. God's gift of reasoning, claims Loveless, grants the licence for his attack.

*The Church Shown Up* moves quickly from the opening argument with Walter about the visit to Hazelbury Bryan into the exposure of priestcraft by way of a witty manoeuvre. Loveless states that by mentioning 'hypocrites and mock religion' in *The Victims of Whiggery*, he has flushed out his foes in their reaction: 'reverend gentlemen have said, "He means us."' (p. 5.). Dismissing Walter's accusation of 'wickedness', and claiming he has created 'no just offence', Loveless identifies Walter's querulous hostility to be grounded in the complaint that he (that is, Loveless), 'will make the labouring men dissatisfied and discontented.' This common liberal argument about the contentment of the labourer being disturbed by radical ideas, Loveless notes, is 'pure priestcraft', a deceit spoken from behind a mask of authority, and from here the pamphlet discards the argument with Walter in order to turn to its larger subject, beginning with the first of its substantial excerpts from Howitt:

This is speaking out; this is pure priestcraft. Alike unchangeable in its tone and temper, its views and desires, it has always in every nation and every name, been the same. Its nature is one and that nature essentially evil; its object is self-gratification and self-aggrandizement; its means the basest frauds and the most shameless delusions. That nothing so mean in weakness, so daring in assumption, or so arrogant in command; that professing to be merciful, nothing has ever exhibited itself in shapes of equal cruelty; that proclaiming to others the utter vanity of wordly goods, its cupidity is insatiable and its ambition boundless ... (pp. 5–6.)

Priestcraft, Loveless claims (borrowing again from Howitt), 'has been the same from the days of the flood to this present year; it has ridden on exultingly, the everlasting incubus of the groaning world' (p. 6.). The pamphlet proceeds to traduce the perceived corruption of the Church: the tyranny and inquisition in the early years of the Church of England; the persecution of the Quakers; the abusive power of the Church and State connection 'which has increased its wealth and worldly-mindedness' and has produced 'a spirit of bigotry and intolerance in its sons and daughters'; the 'luxury' of clerics; simony; mummery; the Church's role in 'impressing poor for the army and navy'. *The Church Shown Up* is a startling and relentless catalogue of accusations voiced in a tone of incredulity at the extent of unrestrained, unaccountable corruption and deceit. The pamphlet ends in a declaration of an

inevitable social transformation proceeding from a dual source: the spread of knowledge – ‘the rapid march of intelligence’ which will ‘ere long scatter its healing, saving and benign influence over and around the darkness and ignorance of the human mind’, and the return to the Bible’s ‘principles of morality’ once it is ‘stripped of the appendages and mystifications of priestcraft’ (p. 15.). In these respects, *The Church Shown Up* is consonant with the strong radical educationalist campaign of the time, as represented for example by Hetherington’s *Poor Man’s Guardian* with its famous strapline ‘Knowledge is Power’. But Loveless does not settle for the ‘power of knowledge’ alone. While he alludes to Hetherington’s motto, he links it with another – ‘union as strength’ a tag he had employed so effectively in the conclusion to *The Victims of Wiggery*,<sup>41</sup> and which here supports the powerful spectre of the massed people:

... all will see and know their real position, and when they will prove union to be strength and knowledge to be power: then they will stand up with the bold front of men determined to shake off the trammels of despotism; and when the people are thus instructed and united in all their moral dignity, demanding their just rights with a voice that sounds like thunder, or as the rushing of mighty waters, no tyrannical power on earth dare resist them (p.15)

This is volatile prose, the semantics of which resonate in different dimensions. Loveless combines the languages of educational radicalism, unionism in the broadest sense, the rhetoric of Paine and his followers, and biblical apocalypse in an unambiguous call for people to stand together for the irresistible cause of ‘just rights’. Such powerful historical references attribute weight and precedent to his argument: this is radicalism ballasted with tradition. At the same time, there is a strong and clever connotative charge around the use of the contested word ‘bold’: the ‘bold front of men’ is a clear evocation of collective power, and in this era of mass protest it would have readily conjured up for the contemporary readership the spectre of the crowd. For the liberal and conservative readers, this meant the nightmare of the mob, while for radical readers, it meant the vision of the march of mind and the protests of political entitlement. For the radicals ‘bold’ signifies courage and determination, but for reactionaries ‘bold’ means presumption,

41 ‘Let the working classes of Britain, seeing the necessity of acting upon such a principle, remembering that union is power, listen to nothing that might be presented before them to draw their attention from the subject ... and they will accomplish their own salvation and that of the world.’ *Victims of Whiggery*, p. 32.

the forwardness of the working man who does not know his place (as in James Frampton's 'The Persons who attend these meetings have become much more bold of late' quoted above). Although this passage echoes the closing section of *The Victims of Whiggery*, it goes further in its democratic claim.

*The Church Shown Up* may not be unique in its provocative style, but the sustained and unrestrained hostility make it stand out. It marks a sharp transition in Loveless's public persona from travestied innocent to aggressive orator, and sets him apart from many of his contemporary anti-clerical pamphleteers. There is no hermeneutic disputing in his text and no fastidious distinction.<sup>42</sup> He uses scripture not as an arena for quibbling or pedantry, but as a weapon in the wider castigation of corruption, injustice and immorality, such as the hypocrisy implicit in ministers exhorting their congregations to fight in the wars ('Have not the clergy ... advocated the principle, and been the abettors of impressing the poor for the army and navy ... making legal murderers of them, and offering up prayers that they may murder and destroy to a great extent'), or the terrible injustices of refusing burial rites to the unbaptised, or the Church's role in the subjugation of the poor (p. 14.). His catalogue of venality is beyond remedy. This is not a matter for reform. For Loveless, the Church itself is historically defiled:

If the church of Rome be a "mother," she has children; if she be a "mother of harlots," her daughters must be prostitutes; then is not the church of England one of those prostituted daughters? (p. 8.)

And the root problem here, the consequence of such progeny, is the establishment of Church and State:

Yes, sir, *the church is in danger*; and its connexion with the state, and the corruptions thence arising is the cause of that danger; its connexion with the state has increased its wealth and worldly mindedness, which is dangerous to a Christian community; its

42 Hetherington's *Cheap Salvation, or, An Antidote to Priestcraft*, for instance, adopts the moderate and patient tactics of rational disputation over biblical text to attack the Church. It is an intellectual exercise to demonstrate the powers of radical thinking in the arena of Biblical exegesis, but that is the full extent of its range and impact. Compared to *The Church Shown Up* it is dull and dry. Thomas Hardy's (Thomas Hardy of Leicester) *Priestcraft Exposed* (1838) by contrast is a pious and carefully worded complaint about the pomp and richness of the Church and its loss of apostolic spirit. While it condemns the direction of the Church roundly enough, its purpose is to critique and no more.

connexion with the state has a tendency to beget a spirit of bigotry and intolerance in its sons and daughters. (p. 9.)

In both these passages, Loveless turns the defence of Anglican reformist rationale upon itself. The anti-Catholic evangelicals, he suggests, are historically compromised by the vocabulary of harlotry.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, reformists such as John Acaster (who is the prime reference point here as the author of two works titled 'The Church in Danger') are confounded by the fundamental problem of an interlocked Church and State.<sup>44</sup>

We may never be able to discover the full details of how *The Church Shown Up* was written, nor how much of it was composed by George Loveless alone, nor whether further borrowings beyond the extensive use of Howitt from more obscure sources are included. Radical publishing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not overly-nice about such matters, and in this instance the conventional notion of authorship is replaced by a collective identity under a single and much celebrated signature.<sup>45</sup> *The Church Shown Up* takes the radical challenge to the established church to a new and dangerously provocative level. While it stands on the shoulders of Wade's work, and relies heavily on Howitt's book, its own democratic principles are unequivocal.<sup>46</sup>

43 Loveless refers specifically (p. 8) to 'Babylon the great, the mother of harlots abominations of the earth' (Revelations, 17, 5) which he notes is used by the Church of England as a particular description of the Church or Rome.

44 Revd J. Acaster, *The Church in Danger from herself: or the Causes of her present declining State explained* (1829) and *Remedies for the Church in Danger, or Hints to the Legislature on Church Reform* (1830).

45 A classic case of such authorship is that of Robert Wedderburn (1762–1836) whose name was appended to a number of publications in 1820–21 that were written by George Cannon, or his close associates. See I. McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 152–55.

46 Neither Howitt nor Wade present themselves as democrats; both belong to other strata of reformist critique. Howitt's extensive and vigorous attack is solely directed against the dogma and bigotry of the Church, and his professed aim is to serve the 'spread and truth of knowledge' (vi); Wade, rightly described by E.P. Thompson as a utilitarian rationalist, clearly – though possibly with a sly tongue-in-cheek – protests his purpose is not revolutionary: 'it is alleged dangerous opinions are abroad – opinions menacing the security of property and all social institutions. There are the followers of Robert Owen, of Thomas Paine, of Joseph Spence ... But does any sane person believe that the vast rational mass of English society, set in its solid frame-work of a thousand years' duration, can be endangered by such puny assailants ... Let us have the renovated constitution, based on the general interest, and all

Notwithstanding all the efforts of the clergy to impress this upon their minds, as a command from God, the labouring classes have learnt that, living in a country which overflows with the abundance of the fruits of their labour, the tenth part of which they never enjoy, the first great object they ought to have in view is their own emancipation from mental and political slavery; that the earth was given to man for an inheritance and not to become the property of individuals; that if any man will not work he ought not to eat; that all property honestly acquired should be held sacred and inviolable, that all governments and laws should exist for the common benefit, protection, and security of all the people, and not for the emolument or aggrandizement of any particular family, single man, or set of men. (pp. 14–15.)

The references stretch forward and back; the allusions and derivations are richly dense and revealing. The concept of mental slavery recalls William Blake's unceasing 'mental fight' and 'mind-forged manacles', and anticipates Marcus Garvey's famous doctrine. It places Loveless in a sustained radical tradition which identifies the curtailing of intellect and knowledge as a prime means of economic and social repression. The notion of God's gift to humankind and the claim for labour as an entitlement to possession (the labour theory of property) has its roots in scripture and in Locke's foundational definitions of property rights in *The Treatise of Civil Government* (1690) as well as chiming in with Ricardo, Smith and Paine. It also evokes the old Protestant reformist arguments about property rights contested in the Putney debates. Loveless follows Locke in reminding his reader that God's gift of the earth was made in common ('not to become the property of individuals')<sup>47</sup> – a proto-communist assertion of a kind – but he also alludes to the notion that labour gives an entitlement to property which should be 'sacred and inviolable', and this also recalls Locke's reasoning: working people have legitimate property claims in the fruits of their labour. For Loveless this is a right, a human right in our terms, or one of 'the rights of man' in the terminology of the late

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the system-mongers, who with their new-born idea vainly think to subvert a social edifice which, with its habits and usages is the result of ages of experience, will disappear with the excitement which gave them birth' (p. 600).

47 See the *Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapter V, where Locke 'endeavour(s) to show how men might come to have a property in several parts of that which God gave to mankind in common' (25) and how 'labour, in the beginning, gave a right of property' (45).

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and it is underlined in his insistence here that ‘government and laws’ exist not to serve or protect the interests of the privileged individual, but the ‘common benefit’ of all the people. And perhaps the most significant echo in the above passage consists in the democratic entitlement in the definition of the purpose of government itself. This derives very precisely, and almost word for word, from the ‘Declaration of Rights’ in the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, Item V, which states:

That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation or community; and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single man, family, or set of men, who are a part only of that community; And that the community hath an indubitable, unalienable and indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish government in such manner as shall be by that community judged most conducive to the public weal.<sup>48</sup>

We cannot know whether this neat quotation from Pennsylvania comes from Loveless or one of his pressmen collaborators, but it is feasible that this part of the Constitution was recognised in radical circles as a classical location for the definition of a government’s accountability to the ‘community’.<sup>49</sup> The missing final statement, with its insistence on the people’s right to ‘reform, alter, or abolish government’ may well have been deemed seditious if printed, and by 1838 radical publishing had a well-developed aptitude for pushing the limits of critique to stop just short of sedition. To those in the know in 1838, perhaps the entitlement to ‘abolish government in such manner ... conducive to the public weal’ still had a ghostly presence, lending a particular inflection to Loveless’s judiciously metaphorical call to arms, and gathering momentum from outside the text in the growing unrest of the period.

48 Pennsylvania Constitution, 1776, ‘Declaration of Rights. Item V.

49 There is another possibility: that both the Declaration and Loveless’s echo have a common source that I have been unable to identify. The Constitution of Pennsylvania has a long and complex history, stretching back to the colony’s foundation and the time of William Penn, and had an important influence alongside that of Virginia in the founding Constitution of the United States (1787). For further details, see E. Piccioni, ‘A Transcription, History and Analysis of the Pennsylvania Declaration of Rights and Constitution of 1776’, *Journal of the Pennsylvania Manuscript Collective* 1: 8 (2016).

In such ways the forgotten writings of George Loveless made a substantial contribution to the political ferment in which Chartism was developing in 1838. *The Church Shown Up* bears the imprimatur of the heady and contentious broil of its time in concentrated form, but it can be understood as more than this too. Its engagement with the fundamental rights of working people and the responsibilities of government exceed both the localised moment of its inception and its possible co-option by the specific politics of Chartism. It incorporates and represents an intellectual circle sharpened and invigorated by hardship and Christian faith on the one hand, and malevolence and frantic attempts at silencing on the other. And there are related ways in which *The Church Shown Up*, with its bricolage of textual traces from many sources – Howitt, Locke, Paine, scripture, constitutional statements and poetic tags, and probably others – is representative of its time. For these elements in all likelihood come not from Loveless’s solitary reading (and certainly not from his ‘small theological library’) but from the communal interchange of a small but vibrant community in the Piddle valley and its environs, meeting among themselves to discuss the vital issues of the day, informed initially by the spread of radical newspapers and other pamphlets and then, in 1837–38, intensified by continuous contact with members of the Dorchester London Committee and the working-class pressmen. It is the richness of this context that allows us to explain the political transitions of Loveless’s years of fame, which began in 1831–2 with his confronting the appalling impossibility of requiring the agricultural labourers of Tolpuddle to live on seven shillings a week, and climaxed here in 1838 with his far-reaching indictment of corruption, repression and prejudice; his comprehensive claim for the legitimacy of democracy and accountable government.

## Appendix 1

### Loveless's borrowings from William Howitt's *Popular History of Priestcraft*

This annex is not a complete list of the borrowings from Howitt in *The Church Shown Up*; those and further references will be included in the annotated edition of Loveless's pamphlets that I am currently preparing. My purpose here is to give some indication of the extent and nature of Loveless's use of Howitt. As far as I can discover, these references have not been identified before. However, there is an intriguing passage in Joyce Marlow's book which suggests that there had been some contention about Loveless's authorship: 'whether he actually wrote the pamphlet, which has been queried, my opinion is that he did. He may well have received editorial assistance, but if he did not write *The Church Shown Up* neither did he write *The Victims of Whiggery*, for the style is consistent' (p.222). Marlow gives no further reference as to where this query was made.

Of Loveless's derivations from Howitt I give three substantial examples here, comprising in total around three pages of Loveless's pamphlet (which is fifteen pages long). In all cases, no direct references are made to Howitt's work, and Howitt is never named. There are sometimes quotation marks, but these are not used consistently or precisely.

1. CSU, pp.5 – 6. From 'Its nature is one ...' to 'joys of earth and heaven'. This is taken from *PHOP*, pp.3–4, mostly verbatim. While there is no reference given, Howitt's text in this instance is rendered within quotation marks.
2. CSU, p.6. From 'the inquisition was as completely set up ...' to 'poverty, contempt and persecution'. This is taken from *PHOP*, p.184, mostly verbatim. Quotation marks as above. The passage which immediately follows, beginning 'What a picture ...' and ending 'from the minds of the clergy of the present age' (p.6) is drawn from *PHOP*, p.188. Partially verbatim, without quotation marks.
3. CSU, pp.11 – 12. From 'How numerous too...' to 'the souls of men.' This is all drawn from *PHOP*, p.240, although the ordering and some of the wording is changed. Some quotation marks enclose a re-ordered textual excerpt.

It is not possible to conclude which version of Howitt's much republished book was used by Loveless, but given Cleave's involvement in publishing *The Church Shown Up*, his abridged 1834 edition presents itself as the most likely source.