

BRITISH ACADEMY LECTURE

The Life of Learning

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- BIRON What is the end of study, let me know?
KING Why, that to know which else we should not know.
BIRON Things hid and barred, you mean, from common sense?
KING Ay, that is study's god-like recompense.

William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i.

THERE WOULD BE NO BRITISH ACADEMY if there were no individuals who devoted their working lives to the study of the past—its history, its languages and literature, its material remains and its religious, legal and philosophical traditions. These are the studies which, along with the social sciences, the Academy exists to foster. Yet many intelligent people are perplexed, and sometimes even indignant, that human energies should be expended in this way. Here is an irate peer, speaking some years ago in the House of Lords: ‘What a scandal, and what a perversion of resources . . . when one considers some of the subjects of the research being undertaken at postgraduate level in our universities. I pluck one . . . Someone in a university somewhere has been beavering away for the past three or four years on a study called “Concepts of Civility in England between 1570 and 1670”. Fundamental, my Lords, to our pioneering economic and technological future!’¹

It would be easy to assemble similar expressions of scepticism about the value of humane scholarship, even scholarship as distinguished as

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In all quotations, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation have been modernised. Unless otherwise stated, the works cited in the footnotes were published in London.

¹ *The Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), House of Lords*, 5th ser., cdxxi, col. 1072 (24 June 1981). The speaker was the late Lord Crowther-Hunt, Rector of Exeter College, Oxford.

that study of civility by my student, Dr Anna Bryson, proved to be.² The usual reaction of scholars to such complaints is to pause briefly, to lament their philistinism, and then to continue with business as usual. If others cannot see for themselves the value of what they do, they assume that there will be little point in trying to explain it.

Yet, four hundred years ago, scholars enjoyed much higher esteem than they do now. Rulers competed for their services and their work was assumed to be of crucial importance to everyone. I would like, therefore, to reflect on the life of learning in early modern England, in the hope of shedding some light on the very different position of those who lead that life today.

Our understanding of the scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been greatly advanced recently by historians who have sought to reconstruct their working methods and mental processes.³ My objective is rather different. I too want to ask what led these men (for they were nearly all men) to devote their energies to editing texts and investigating forgotten antiquities. But my main concern is their role in the society of their day. I want to view them, as it were, ethnographically, to consider the relationship between their lives of learning and the larger world in which they lived, and to contrast it with the position of their modern counterparts

I shall concentrate on scholars who were engaged in the recovery and interpretation of the past, and ignore those who were concerned with mathematics, philosophy, or the nature of the physical world. Such a focus is, of course, anachronistic. At this time there was little distinction between those who studied languages, literature, and history and those who pursued the physical and biological sciences. As often as not, they were the same people. To engage seriously with mathematics or medicine, one needed to understand ancient writings in Greek and Arabic, while to study the literature of classical antiquity was to find oneself immersed in astronomy, geometry, and natural science.⁴ Many scholars aspired to

² Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility. Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

³ An exacting manifesto on how to write the history of scholarship was composed over twenty years ago by the historian who has subsequently become its outstanding contemporary practitioner: Anthony Grafton, 'The Origins of Scholarship', *The American Scholar* (Spring 1979). I have not followed his precepts, but my reflections have been stimulated by his work. I am also indebted to the excellent contributions of Mordechai Feingold to *The History of the University of Oxford*, iv. *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford, 1997), pp. 211–503.

⁴ For a fine demonstration of the interconnectedness of humane and scientific learning, see Anthony Grafton, 'Humanism and Science in Rudolphine Prague: Kepler in Context', in his *Defenders of the Text. The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), chap. 7.

universal erudition: their aim was to become ‘a walking library’, as the greatest of them were admirably described: like James Ussher, ‘a walking concordance and living library’, or the academic giant of Elizabethan Oxford, John Rainolds, ‘a living library and a third university’.⁵

The role of these masters of erudition was in many ways similar to that of the learned sages of Judaism or Islam. They were custodians of traditional wisdom, persons to whom rulers turned at times of crisis, essential authorities on how one should live. Most societies have such sages and, the more complex their traditions, the more intellectually demanding is the sage’s role.⁶

In early modern England, the wisdom to which the learned devoted their attention had three main ingredients. First were the sacred texts of the Christian religion and the accumulation of theological dogma and ecclesiastical practice which had grown up around them. Second was the literary and material inheritance of classical antiquity, which was regarded as an indispensable source of knowledge, moral guidance, and aesthetic inspiration. Third was the historical accumulation of legal rights and privileges which authenticated the distribution of power and property. Each of these bodies of tradition was difficult of access. Locked up in remote texts and dead languages, they could be expounded only by erudite persons who had become expert through years of painful study.

In post-Reformation England the first task of the learned was to defend and interpret the Christian religion and, more especially, the government, liturgy, and doctrine of the Anglican Church. The huge edifice of ecclesiastical preferment—benefices, canonries, deaneries, and bishoprics—provided scholars with their main source of subsistence; and

⁵ Richard Parr, *The Life of the Most Reverend Father in God, James Ussher* (1686), p. 100; Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. Philip Bliss (1813–20), ii, col. 13. Thomas Dempster was a ‘speaking library’ (Peter Bayle, *The Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (2nd edn., ed. P. Des Maizeaux (1734–8), ii, 646), Thomas Gataker ‘a living library’ (Simeon Ashe, *Gray Hayres crowned with Grace* (1655), 72), and John Hales a ‘*bibliotheca ambulans*’ (*Original Letters of Eminent Literary Men*, ed. Sir Henry Ellis (Camden Soc., 1843), p. 367). George Chapman’s scholar was ‘a walking dictionary’; ‘Euthymiae Raptus; The Tears of Peace’, in *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (1941), p. 185.

⁶ See Florian Znaniecki, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (New York, 1940). Helpful guides to the role of learning in Islam include Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant. The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, 1970); Ira M. Lapidus, ‘Knowledge, Virtue, and Action: the Classical Muslim Conception of *Adab* and the Nature of Religious Fulfillment in Islam’, in *Moral Conduct and Authority. The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (1984); R. C. Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul. A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (1986); and Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo. A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ, 1992).

it was on religious topics—the Bible, the Fathers, theological dogma and ecclesiastical history—that their intellectual energies were concentrated. To this task they devoted great erudition, vast labour, and, often, exquisite intellectual skills. But their inquiries were not open-ended or value-free: they were intended to buttress the establishment and uphold the Church of England.

It is important to realise that religious preoccupations lay behind the growth of many of our modern academic disciplines. Hebrew was essential for the comprehension of the Bible.⁷ So were Arabic and other Near Eastern languages. Of course, there were other practical reasons for studying Arabic: it gave access to manuscript works of Greek and Muslim science, and it facilitated relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁸ But the religious objective was primary, and the most conspicuous achievement of English orientalists in this period was the London Polyglot Bible of 1654–7, with its six volumes of parallel texts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Samaritan, Chaldee, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Persian. In the later seventeenth century, the missionary impulse led one Oxford orientalist, Thomas Hyde, to put out an edition of the Gospels in Malay, another, William Seaman, to translate the New Testament into Turkish and a third, Humphrey Prideaux, to recommend the study of Sanskrit, so that English clerics should be able to confute the religion of the Brahmins.⁹

Research into Church history was also stimulated by immediate religious needs. Protestants maintained that the medieval Church had departed from the spirit of early Christianity; the great edifice of papal power was an unjustified usurpation; and the Reformation was a return

⁷ Robert Wakefield, *On The Three Languages [1524]*, ed. G. Lloyd Jones (Binghamton, NY, 1989), pp. 8–9, 58–61; G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: a Third Language* (Manchester, 1983); S. L. Greenslade, in *The History of the University of Oxford*, iii. *The Collegiate University*, ed. James McConica (Oxford, 1986), pp. 316–18; Feingold, in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 450–75; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (1966), pp. 22–3; Frank E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff. Judaism through Christian Eyes* (1992), pp. 128–41.

⁸ Wakefield, *On The Three Languages*, pp. 24–5, 58; Alastair Hamilton, *William Bedwell the Arabist 1563–1632* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 69–80; P. M. Holt, *Studies in the History of the Near East* (1973), pp. 16–17, 20–1, 28–30; *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. G. A. Russell (Leiden, 1994); G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning. The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996); and Feingold in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 475–503.

⁹ Thomas Hyde, *Jang Ampat Evangelia Derri Tuan Kita Jesu Christi* (Oxford, 1677) (the translations had been made by the Dutchmen, Albert Ruyl and Jan van Hasel, for use by the Dutch East India Company); Falconer Madan, *Oxford Books* (Oxford, 1895–1931), iii. 355, 122, 204–5 (and see also pp. 122 and 247); (anon.), *The Life of the Reverend Humphrey Prideaux* (1748), p. 169. James Legge (1815–97), translator of the Chinese classics and the first Oxford professor of Chinese, had learned the language in order to conduct a Christian mission in Hong Kong.

to the practice of the primitive church. Henry VIII's Act against Appeals to Rome claimed that 'divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles' showed that England was an 'empire', capable of religious independence. In the ensuing torrent of controversy as to whether the Reformation really was 'declarative of the old' and not 'introductive of the new',¹⁰ historical learning was crucial.¹¹

The study of Anglo-Saxon similarly received powerful impetus from the desire of Elizabeth's archbishop, Matthew Parker, to demonstrate that the English church had existed independently of Rome, before the coming of St Augustine, and that the Anglo-Saxons were proto-Protestant in their sympathies, opponents of transubstantiation and supporters of vernacular scriptures and a married clergy.¹² Recusant scholars, unsurprisingly, produced an alternative version of history depicting the Anglo-Saxons as pious Catholics accepting the jurisdiction of Rome.¹³ An ecclesiastical history which would demonstrate the independence from Rome of the ancient British church became a central scholarly objective; and, in the process, Anglo-Saxon manuscripts were accumulated and texts put into print. Well into the eighteenth century, it was still thought important to prove that the faith, worship, and discipline of the Church

¹⁰ Sir Edward Coke, in Public Record Office, SP 14/13/ fols. 61–2, printed in F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution. English Historical Writing and Thought 1580–1640* (1962), p. 84.

¹¹ 24 Hen. viii. c.12 (1533); Graham Nicholson, 'The Act of Appeals and the English Reformation', in *Law and Government under the Tudors*, ed. Claire Cross, David Loades and J. J. Scarisbrick (Cambridge, 1988). See also F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, CA, 1967), chap. iii, and May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford, 1971), esp. chap. iii. In the age of the Reformation comparable arguments were conducted all over Europe; see Pontien Polman, *L'Élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVI^e siècle* (Gembloux, 1932). For equivalent French efforts to vindicate the historical independence of the Gallican Church, see Bruno Neveu, *Érudition et Religion aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1994).

¹² *The Gospels of the fower Euangelistes*, [ed. John Foxe] (1571), sig. ¶ijr–v. See, in general, Eleanor N. Adams, *Old English Scholarship in England from 1566–1800* (New Haven, London and Oxford, 1917); C. E. Wright, 'The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, i (1949–53), esp. pp. 226–7; *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship. The First Three Centuries*, ed. Carl T. Berkhout and Milton McC. Gatch (Boston, MA, 1982); R. I. Page, *Matthew Parker and His Books* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1993); and *The Recovery of Old English. Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Timothy Graham (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000).

¹³ e.g., *The History of the Church of Englande. Compiled by Venerable Bede, Englishman*, trans. Thomas Stapleton (Antwerp, 1565); Thomas Stapleton, *A Fortresse of the Faith* (Antwerp, 1565); Nicholas Harpsfield, *Historia Anglicana Ecclesiastica*, ed. Richard Gibbons (Douai, 1632); Richard Broughton, *The Ecclesiasticall Historie of Great Britaine* (Douai, 1623). See also Daniel Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (1990), pp. 35–44.

of England were 'in great measure the same with that of the primitive Saxons'.¹⁴

The basic materials of English medieval history were also published in response to ecclesiastical controversy, as David Douglas showed sixty years ago in his still delightful book, *English Scholars*.¹⁵ The claims made in the 1690s by High Churchmen for the rights of the Lower House of Convocation against the Crown and the Whig bishops unleashed the historical learning of Edmund Gibson, White Kennett, and William Wake, who, between them, combed the records of English ecclesiastical history to produce a series of definitive works on the law and constitution of the Church of England.¹⁶

Like a modern research council, therefore, the Anglican Church throughout this period had its 'thematic priorities'. Biblical scholarship, for example, was crucial for a religion which gave the Scriptures higher authority than the tradition of the Church. The Reformers regarded the purification of Scripture as the precondition of a purified religion. It was from corruptions and misunderstandings that heresies arose; and the tiniest errors in transcription or translation could have catastrophic consequences, generating what Samuel Butler called

petulant, capricious sects
The maggots of corrupted texts.¹⁷

¹⁴ Sir John Fortescue, *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy*, ed. John Fortescue-Aland (1714), p. lxxviii; *An English-Saxon Homily on the Birth-Day of St Gregory*, trans. Eliz(abeth) E(lstob) (1709), pp. xiv–xv (re-echoed by James Ingram, *An Inaugural Lecture on the Utility of Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Oxford, 1807), pp. 25–6). Sir Robert Cotton had planned an ecclesiastical history along these lines; Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton 1586–1631. History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 33–4. Notable works in this tradition include James Ussher, *Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates . . . Historia* (Dublin, 1639); I[saac] B[asire], *De Antiqua Ecclesiae Britannicae Libertate; atque de legitima eiusdem Ecclesiae exemptione a Romano Patriarchatu Diatribe* (Bruges, 1656); Sir Roger Twisden, *An Historical Vindication of the Church of England in Point of Schism* (1675); Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Britannicae; or the Antiquities of the British Churches* [1685], ed. Thomas Pinder Pantin (Oxford, 1842).

¹⁵ David Douglas, *English Scholars 1660–1730* (1939; 2nd edn., 1951). He remarks, for example, that the chief motive of Henry Wharton, author of the great collection of materials for the history of the English medieval Church, *Anglia Sacra* (1691), was 'the desire to discover in the past a justification of the ecclesiastical system that he served' (p. 142). In the *Praefatio* to that work, Wharton makes clear his regret for the passing of the monasteries and his hatred of Puritans (i, pp. x–xi).

¹⁶ Edmund Gibson, *Synodus Anglicana* (1702); id., *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani* (1713); White Kennett, *Ecclesiastical Synods and Parliamentary Convocations in the Church of England historically stated and justly vindicated* (1701); William Wake, *The State of the Church and Clergy of England* (1703).

¹⁷ *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford, 1967), p. 234 (3rd part, canto ii, lines 9–10). Cf. Erasmus's maxim: *tantula res gignit hereticum sensum*, cit. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical*

The successive English translations of the Bible drew on the philological techniques of European humanism, but they were not occasioned by disinterested erudition.¹⁸ Translation was a highly contested matter. The King James Version of 1611 was a response to the Puritan claim that the English Bibles put out under the Tudors were ‘corrupt, and not answerable to the truth of the original’. The King agreed, though adding that they were not as bad as the Geneva version, whose marginal notes were ‘very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits’.¹⁹ The earlier bibles had also been criticised by English Catholic exiles, who published their own translation of the New Testament at Rheims in 1582.²⁰ To produce a new, authorised version, the King handed the task over to what was generally recognised as the highest court of appeal in such matters, namely a committee of ‘the best learned in both the universities’.²¹

In seventeenth-century England, Biblical scholarship remained a matter of public concern. In the 1640s the House of Commons voted money for the publication of the oldest manuscript of the Greek New Testament,²² and in the 1650s Parliament set up a committee to revise the Authorised Version,²³ though neither project was completed. In 1707,

Scholarship from 1300 to 1850 (Oxford, 1976), p. 75; and Scaliger’s: *Non aliunde dissidia in religione pendent, quam ab ignoracione grammaticae*, cit. Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger. A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1983–93), ii, 498 n. Also John Gauden, *Hieraspistes: A Defence by way of Apology for the Ministry and Ministers of the Church of England* (1653), p. 398; H(enry) Th(urman), *A Defence of Humane Learning in the Ministry* (Oxford, 1660), p. 23.

¹⁸ Greenslade, ‘The Faculty of Theology’, in *History of the University of Oxford*, iii, 319–20. For the European background, Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ. New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).

¹⁹ William Barlow, ‘The Summe and Substance of the Conference . . . at Hampton Court, Jan. 14, 1603’, in Edward Cardwell, *A History of Conferences and other Proceedings connected with the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer, from the Year 1558 to the Year 1690* (3rd edn., Oxford, 1849), pp. 187–8. On the notes to the Geneva Bible, see Maurice Betteridge, ‘The bitter notes; the Geneva Bible and its annotations’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, xiv (1983).

²⁰ Gregory Martin, *A Discoverie of the Manifold Corruptions of the Holy Scriptures by the Heretikes of our Daies, specially the English Sectaries* (Rheims, 1582). Cf. William Fulke, *A Defence of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holy Scriptures into the English Tongue, against the Cavils of Gregory Martin* (1582), ed. Charles Henry Hartshorne (Parker Soc., Cambridge, 1843).

²¹ Barlow, ‘Summe and Substance’, in Cardwell, *Conferences*, p. 188.

²² *Journals of the House of Commons* (1803), iv, 9, 195, 201.

²³ *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke 1605–1675*, ed. Ruth Spalding, British Academy, Records of Social and Economic History (1990), pp. 455–6. The revision had been urged by the Hebrew scholar, John Lightfoot, in *A Sermon preached before the Honorable House of Commons . . . upon the 26. day of August 1645* (1645), p. 30.

after thirty years' labour, the Oxford scholar, John Mill, produced an edition of the Greek New Testament which listed some thirty thousand variants. This aroused the mockery of Deists and freethinkers, as well as the scorn of Catholics for a Church which claimed to base itself on the exact word of Scripture. It inspired Richard Bentley to propose a new, and definitive, edition of the New Testament, which would be 'a Charter, a *Magna Carta*, to the whole Christian Church'. It never happened, but it reminds us that the greatest classicist of his day accepted that a primary purpose of scholarship was the advancement of the Christian religion.²⁴

The polemical war effort against Rome also required an intensified study of the Church Fathers. The tone of many future exchanges was set in 1559, when John Jewel formally challenged the Catholics to find support for twenty-seven points of Popish doctrine in 'any one sufficient sentence out of any old catholic doctor or father, or out of any old general council, or out of the holy scriptures of God, or any one example of the primitive church'.²⁵ The polymath, John Rainolds, had begun as a lecturer on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but he was appointed in 1586 to a special post in polemical theology, with the task of replying to Robert Bellarmine and other Catholic theologians. 'With indefatigable pains in a short space, [we are told, he] read all the Greek and Latin fathers, and perused all ancient records of the Church, that he could come by; and grew so perfect in them', that he could refute any Roman pronouncement as soon as it was made.²⁶

²⁴ *The Correspondence of Richard Bentley*, [ed. Christopher Wordsworth] (1842), ii. 502–73; 'A Member of Trinity College in Cambridge', *Dr Bentley's Proposals for Printing a New Edition of the Greek Testament* (1721), sig. A2v. An idea of the intensity of the issues at stake in such projects is given by the correspondent who urged Bentley to remove the interpolation in 1 John 5. 7–8 ('the Johannine Comma'): 'the souls of millions of mankind implore it from you, who have suffered, and are daily suffering, in doctrines relating to their eternal salvation'; *Correspondence of Richard Bentley*, ii. 532. Bentley's own motives continue to be debated. See, e.g., H. D. Jocelyn, 'Philology and Education', *Liverpool Classical Papers*, 1 (Liverpool, 1988), 15–17.

²⁵ *The Works of John Jewel*, ed. John Ayre (Parker Soc., Cambridge, 1845–50), i. 104. Sixty-seven items in the ensuing controversy are listed by A. C. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose 1559–1582* (1950), pp. 60–6. For a penetrating discussion, see Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound. Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, NC, 1979), pp. 182–94.

²⁶ Daniel Featley, 'The Life and Death of John Reinolds', in Thomas Fuller, *Abel Redevivus* [1651], ed. William Nichols (1867), ii. 224–6. Rainolds's post was founded by Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, and funded after his death by the 2nd Earl of Essex. Cf. J. W. Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds, 1990), pp. 324–31.

An equally implacable enemy of Rome was Bodley's first Librarian, Thomas James, who used the Papal Index of prohibited books as a shopping list. He persuaded Oxford University and the Archbishop of Canterbury to set up a research institute of scholars to remove what he thought were deliberate corruptions in recent Catholic editions of the Latin Fathers.²⁷ The responsibilities for this work were carefully divided: the discovery of deliberate forgeries needed 'judgment', and was therefore assigned to 'certain grave divines'; the correction of modern corruptions needed only 'industry', and was given to 'younger divines'; the removal of ancient corruptions needed both 'industry and judgment', and so was allocated to divines who were 'neither very ancient nor very young, but of a middle sort'.²⁸

From Sir Henry Savile's eight volumes of St John Chrysostom, published at Eton in 1610–13, to John Fell's edition of St Cyprian from Oxford in 1682, the overriding concern of Anglican patristic scholarship was to show that the early Church, like the Church of England, had bishops, but did not recognise the supremacy of the bishop of Rome.²⁹ To refute the Presbyterians, James Ussher and the Cambridge scholar, John Pearson, employed their critical genius to prove the authenticity of the key epistles of St Ignatius, the first-century bishop of Antioch, who had laid such stress on the episcopal office.³⁰ To justify

²⁷ Their work is brilliantly analysed by N. R. Ker, 'Thomas James's collation of Gregory, Cyprian and Ambrose', *The Bodleian Library Record*, iv (1952–3). See also Ian Philip, *The Bodleian Library in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 2, 15–16, and D. J. B. Trim, 'Sir Thomas Bodley and the International Protestant Cause', *The Bodleian Library Record*, xvi (1997–9). For the European context, Pierre Petitmengin, 'De adulteratis patrum editionibus. La critique des textes au service de l'orthodoxie', in *Les Pères de l'Église au XVII^e Siècle, Actes du Colloque de Lyon, 2–5 octobre 1991*, ed. E. Bury and B. Meunier (Paris, 1993).

²⁸ Thomas James, *A Treatise of the Corruption of Scripture, Councils, and Fathers* (1611), part 5, pp. 1–2.

²⁹ For discussion of patristic learning and its uses in this period: *The Apostolic Fathers*, part II, vol. i, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (2nd edn., 1889), pp. 237–45; F. L. Cross, 'Patristic study at Oxford', *Abstract of Proceedings of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology* (Oxford, 1948–9); John W. Packer, *The Transformation of Anglicanism 1643–1660* (Manchester, 1969), chap. v; G. V. Bennett, 'Patristic Tradition in Anglican Thought, 1660–1900', in *Tradition in Lutheranism and Anglikanismus*, ed. Günther Gassmann and Vilmos Vajta (*Oecumenica*, 1971–2); id., *To the Church of England*, ed. Geoffrey Rowell (Worthing, 1988), pp. 44–5, 55, 89, 97–8; John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (1991), chap. 3; Günther Thomann, 'John Ernest Grabe (1661–1711): Lutheran Syncretist and Anglican Patristic Scholar', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 (1992); Feingold, in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv, 839, 873–4.

³⁰ *Polycarpi et Ignatii Epistolae*, ed. James Ussher (Oxford, 1644), and John Pearson, *Vindiciae*

the persecution of the Nonconformists, Restoration divines studied the fourth-century schism of the Donatists;³¹ and to repel the sceptical challenge from the Socinians, the High Churchman, George Bull, deployed great learning to show that the doctrine of the Trinity went back before the Council of Nicaea.³² In the early eighteenth century a new impulse to patristic study came from the Non-Jurors, whose scholars turned from the Book of Common Prayer to the liturgies of the early Church, which they excavated in order to provide support for their doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice.³³

In an age when so many disputed issues were debated by recourse to the Bible, the Fathers, and the early Councils, learned men were indispensable. Just as Henry VIII had his teams of university-trained scholars who prepared justifications for his divorce from Catherine of Aragon and developed historical arguments for the breach with Rome,³⁴ so, it was claimed, the Elizabethan bishops needed ‘the convenient assistance of learned men about them in the house, for the deciding of matters of religion which daily do arise’.³⁵ The learned justified the Royal Supremacy, episcopacy and the Anglican liturgy. They also produced historical arguments in defence of the clergy’s material interests, particularly their right

Epistolarum S. Ignatii (Cambridge, 1672). The letters were edited again by Thomas Smith (Oxford, 1709). Thomas Long claimed that Pearson’s vindication of Ignatius ‘hath struck Mr Baxter’s, and others’ discourses against episcopacy, to the very heart, so as none need to strike again’; *A Review of Mr Richard Baxter’s Life* (1697), p. 117.

³¹ Mark Goldie, ‘The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England’, in *From Persecution to Toleration. The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford, 1991), pp. 340–6.

³² His three works on the subject were *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae* (Oxford, 1685); *Judicium Ecclesiae Catholicae* (1694); and *Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio* (in *Georgii Bulli . . . Opera Omnia*, ed. John Ernest Grabe (1703)). See Robert Nelson, *The Life of Dr George Bull* (1713), pp. 344–7, 369–402; D. W. Dockrill, ‘The Authority of the Fathers in the Great Trinitarian Debates of the Sixteen Nineties’, *Studia Patristica*, xviii (1990), p. 338.

³³ Thomas Brett, *A Collection of the Principal Liturgies, used by the Christian Church in the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist* (1720); and Thomas Deacon, *A Compleat Collection of Devotions, both publick and private, taken from the Apostolical Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England* (1734). See J. H. Overton, *The Non-Jurors* (1902), pp. 400–9, and John C. Findon, ‘The Nonjurors and the Church of England, 1689–1716’, Oxford University, D.Phil. thesis (1978), pp. 164–83.

³⁴ For an excellent survey, John Guy, ‘Thomas Cromwell and the Intellectual Origins of the Henrician Revolution’, in *Reassessing the Henrician Age. Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500–1550*, ed. Alistair Fox and John Guy (Oxford, 1986).

³⁵ R. M. Haines, ‘Some arguments in favour of pluralities in the Elizabethan Church’, *Studies in Church History*, v, ed. G. J. Cuming (Leiden, 1969), p. 178.

to receive tithes and to hold benefices in plurality.³⁶ Superior erudition was the Church's vital weapon.³⁷

Out of the religious conflicts of these centuries emerged many of today's learned institutions. The Oxford University Press was founded by William Laud and revived by John Fell to publish learned material which would sustain the Church of England.³⁸ The Royal Library, forerunner of today's British Library, accumulated literary treasures from the monasteries, because Henry VIII needed them in his fight against Rome.³⁹ The Parker Library in Cambridge gathered a magnificent collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts to prove the independence of the ancient English church.⁴⁰ The Bodleian library in Oxford was intended by its founder to buttress the Protestant cause.⁴¹ It acquired a vast number of Greek and oriental manuscripts because of Laud's belief that the Church of England and the Greek Church had a special affinity, both being ancient episcopal churches who rejected the claims of Rome.⁴² In 1713, Humfrey

³⁶ Among the more notable essays in this genre were Henry Spelman, *De non temerandis Ecclesiis* (1613), id. (et al.), *Tithes too hot to be touched* (1646), and id., *The History and Fate of Sacrilege* (1698); Peter Heylyn, *Ecclesia Vindicata, or the Church of England Justified* (1657); Henry Wharton (with G. Stanhope), *A Defence of Pluralities* (1692) and *The Case of Pluralities and Non-Residence Rightly Stated* (1694); White Kennett, *The Case of Impropriations, and of the Augmentation of Vicarages and other Insufficient Cures, stated by History and Law* (1704); Humphrey Prideaux, *The Original and Right of Tithes, for the Maintenance of the Ministry in a Christian Church, truly stated* (1710), and a projected further work on lay impropriations; *Life of Humphrey Prideaux*, pp. 115–17. Contrast John Selden's demonstration that tithes were not introduced until 400 years after Christ in *The Historie of Tithes* (1618), and William Prynne's historical defence of lay patronage; *Jus Patronatus, or A Briefe Legal and Rational Plea for Advowsons* (1654).

³⁷ To be employed by the like of the Elizabethan bishop, Thomas Bilson, who was 'so well skill'd in languages, so read in the fathers and schoolmen, so judicious in making use of his readings, that at length he was found to be no longer a soldier, but a commander in chief in the spiritual warfare'; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ii. cols. 169–70.

³⁸ Harry Carter, *A History of the Oxford University Press*, i (Oxford, 1975), chaps. iii, v and vi; Feingold in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 843–6. Fell was regarded as 'a great promoter of learning, especially of such as might be any way serviceable to religion, and the benefit of the Church'; Francis Brokesby, *The Life of Mr Henry Dodwell* (1715), p. 140.

³⁹ *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, ed. J. P. Carley, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, British Library and British Academy (2000), 'Introduction', esp. pp. xxvii–xliii.

⁴⁰ Wright, 'The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies'; Page, *Matthew Parker and his Books*.

⁴¹ Trim, 'Sir Thomas Bodley and the International Protestant Cause', pp. 329–30.

⁴² Philip, *The Bodleian Library in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, pp. 37–41; Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Church of England and the Greek Church in the Time of Charles I', in *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution* (1992), chap. 5. In 1647 Parliament voted £500 to buy a collection of Hebrew books for Cambridge University Library; G. K. Fortescue, *Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers, and Manuscripts relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and the Restoration, collected by George Thomason, 1640–1661* (1908), i, pp. vi–vii.

Wanley, keeper of Robert Harley's library, purchased some manuscripts which had been stolen from the Royal Library in Paris, giving as his reason, not just 'their great rarity [and] antiquity', but 'also that, by securing them, divers weapons will be taken out of the hands of Deists and Papists: and much additional strength accrue to the Protestant Religion'.⁴³

The demands of controversy forced participants to be increasingly meticulous in deploying evidence and citing sources. For all his fanaticism, Thomas James, the Protestant Librarian, set out some excellent rules for the comparison and collation of texts.⁴⁴ The study of Biblical and patristic literature generated grammars and lexicons; while arguments about church history led eventually to a deeper understanding of historical change.⁴⁵ The desire to penetrate the meaning of biblical prophecy stimulated many learned investigations into ancient chronology;⁴⁶ and in the cause of improved Biblical commentary, there grew up a vast edifice of learning devoted to ancient geography, law, weights and measures, and numismatics. In the process, knowledge of antiquity was greatly enlarged, rather in the way that in modern times our understanding of Elizabethan history has been much advanced by literary scholars doing gobbets on Shakespeare.⁴⁷ Great works of theological dogma, like Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed* (1659), rested on a vast foundation of biblical and patristic learning. The study of the Fathers required, in the words of a contemporary expert, 'the most clear and refined judgment that can be imagined; an exquisite wit, a quick piercing eye, a perfect ear, a most exact knowledge in all history, both ancient and modern, both ecclesiastical and secular; a perfect knowledge of the ancient tongues; and a long and continual conversation with all sorts of writers, both ancient, of the middle ages, and modern.'⁴⁸

⁴³ *The Diary of Humfrey Wanley 1715–1726*, ed. C. E. Wright and Ruth C. Wright (The Bibliographical Soc., 1966), i, p. xxiii.

⁴⁴ James, *A Treatise of the Corruption of Scripture, Councils, and Fathers*, part 5, pp. 9–11.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, *Clio Unbound*, *passim*.

⁴⁶ Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii, 8, 12–13, 65; Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh', in *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans* (1987), esp. pp. 156–61; James Barr, 'Why the world was created in 4004 B.C.: Archbishop Ussher and Biblical Chronology', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 67 (1984–5); Sir John Marsham, *Chronicus Canon Aegyptiacus, Ebraicus, Graecus, et Disquisitiones* (1672); Frank E. Manuel, *Isaac Newton Historian* (Cambridge, 1963); Scott Mandelbrote, *Footprints of the Lion: Isaac Newton at Work* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 117–30.

⁴⁷ For a demonstration of the importance of classical knowledge for biblical understanding, see, e.g., Thomas Gataker, *Cinmus sive Adversaria Miscellanea* (1651), pp. 314–24.

⁴⁸ Jean Daillé, *A Treatise concerning the Right Use of the Fathers*, trans. T(homas) S(mith) (1651), p. 28. (The translator's early use of the term, 'the middle ages', is noteworthy; Sir Henry Spelman had employed it in 1616, but the next example given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from 1699.)

The same could be said of the second great area of learning, the study of the classical world. Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, humanist scholars in Europe developed most of the essential methods for understanding classical literature and antiquities: textual criticism and commentary, collected fragments of lost authors, assemblages of inscriptions, and studies of ancient life and institutions.⁴⁹ Once again, the project was directly related to what were seen as contemporary needs. The initial impulse was aesthetic and rhetorical. Just as the scholar-poets of Ptolemaic Alexandria had edited Greek texts, removing corruptions and pronouncing on issues of authenticity,⁵⁰ so their Renaissance successors studied ancient literature in order to speak and write more elegant Latin themselves. In England, the classics supplied indispensable models for many different literary genres. When in 1607 William Camden published an enlarged version of his great topographical history, *Britannia*, he was hailed as ‘the Varro, the Strabo, and the Pausanias of Britain’.⁵¹ Classical inspiration was equally crucial for architecture and the visual arts.

Even more importantly, the classics were believed to contain the foundations of human knowledge. As one Elizabethan author put it, it was essential to read ‘Virgil for the tillage of the earth, Vegetius for [the] military profession, Hippocrates and Galen for physic, Justinian for the law, Aristotle, Tully, Euclid, Boethius, Ptolemy for the liberal sciences, Pomponius Mela for cosmography’.⁵² To which list one might add Dioscorides for botany, Pliny for natural history and, for the art of war, Caesar ‘the greatest captain that ever was’.⁵³ In the 1590s the second earl of Essex thought that ‘rules and patterns of policy are as well learned out of old Greek and Roman stories as out of states which are at this day’.⁵⁴ In logic, ethics, political thought, military strategy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine, classical writers were the essential starting-point; and it

⁴⁹ For a very concise account, see Anthony T. Grafton, ‘Scholarship, classical, history of’, in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn., ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford, 1996), pp. 1365–7.

⁵⁰ Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), and N. G. Wilson, ‘Scholarship, ancient: Greek’, in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, pp. 1363–4.

⁵¹ *Camden’s Britannia*, ed. Edmund Gibson (1695), ‘The Preface to the Reader’, sig. A2r.

⁵² Christofer Middleton, *A Short Introduction for to Learne to Swimme. Gathered out of Master Digbys Booke of the Art of Swimming* (1595), ‘To the Reader’, in Nicholas Orme, *Early British Swimming 55 BC–AD 1719* (Exeter, 1983), p. 116.

⁵³ Sir James Turner, *Pallas Armata. Military Essayes of the Ancient Grecian, Roman, and Modern Art of War* (1683; facsimile reprint, New York, 1968), p. 36.

⁵⁴ Paul E. J. Hammer, ‘The uses of scholarship: the secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c.1585–1601’, *English Historical Review*, cix (1994), p. 43.

was in continuing dialogue with them that the new natural philosophy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was erected.⁵⁵

Even agricultural improvement was stimulated by translations of Roman writers. John Evelyn thought that ‘all good Rules of Husbandry’ were to be extracted ‘out of Varro, Cato, and Columella’; and when the Cambridge botanist, John Martyn, published his translation of Virgil’s *Georgics* in 1741, he explained that, ‘though the soil and climate of Italy are different from those of England, yet it has been found by experience, that most of his rules may be put in practice, even here, to advantage’.⁵⁶ These were not bookish affectations. Recent scholarship suggests that some of the most important innovations of the period, like the new grasses and fodder crops, were directly indebted to classical precedent.⁵⁷

Classical philology thus involved the recovery, purification and interpretation of a corpus of texts and artefacts which, for the society of the day, had an immediate relevance: practical, intellectual, literary, aesthetic, and moral. English classical scholars of this period seldom rivalled the achievements of their French and Dutch colleagues, but, by editing and translating texts and by disseminating knowledge of classical antiquity, they performed what was agreed to be an essential social function.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ On the importance attached by contemporary scientists to the explication of the scientific texts of antiquity, see, e.g., Vivian Nutton, *John Caius and the Manuscripts of Galen* (Cambridge Philological Society, 1987) and “‘Prisci Dissectionum Professores’: Greek Texts and Renaissance Anatomists”, in *The Uses of Greek and Latin. Historical Essays*, ed. A. C. Dionisotti, Anthony Grafton and Jill Kraye (1988); Anthony Grafton, ‘Barrow as a scholar’, in *Before Newton. The Life and Times of Isaac Barrow*, ed. Mordechai Feingold (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 293–5; Mandelbrote, *Footprints of the Lion*, pp. 115–16. The point was well made by Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones in his review article, ‘Harnessing the ancients’, *TLS* (25 June 1976), p. 800.

⁵⁶ Bodleian Lib., MS Aubrey 2, fol. 85v; *Pub. Virgilii Maronis Georgicorum Libri Quatuor. The Georgicks of Virgil*, trans. John Martyn (1741), pp. xiv–xv. In his *The Reformed-School* (1651), John Dury prescribed Cato, Varro, and Columella for the education of teenagers in husbandry (p. 58). Cf. the remarks of Henry Dodwell in Degory Wheare, *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories*, 3rd edn., trans. Edmund Bohun (1698), sig. A3r–v.

⁵⁷ See Mauro Ambrosoli, *The Wild and the Sown. Botany and Agriculture in Western Europe: 1350–1850*, trans. Mary McCann Salvatorelli (Cambridge, 1997), esp. chaps. 5, 6, and 7. In Sir Walter Scott’s *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818), however, Reuben Butler ‘nearly destroyed the crofts of Beersheba [a smallholding near Dalkeith] while attempting to cultivate them according to the practice of Columella and Cato the Censor’ (chap. ix).

⁵⁸ Sir John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, ii (Cambridge, 1908), pp. 228–50, 333–58, 401–10; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, trans. Alan Harris, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1982), pp. 77–8; C. O. Brink, *English Classical Scholarship. Historical Reflections on Bentley, Porson, and Housman* (Cambridge, 1986), chap. 1; Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History. Origins of Modern English Historiography* (1987), pp. 87, 96; Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, pp. 194–5; Grafton, ‘Barrow as a scholar’, pp. 291–5; Feingold in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 261–9.

The third area of scholarly activity was the study of the English past: its laws and institutions, its local antiquities, and the history and genealogy of its landed families. The huge volume of antiquarian learning and publication which distinguishes these years reflected national sentiment and local patriotism. Most of it was designed to give legitimacy to ruling families, to foster pride in English distinctiveness and to enhance the sense of identity in the local communities.⁵⁹ Investigations into the constitutional history of medieval England were driven by contemporary disputes about the roles of King, Parliament, and Common Law. The legal status of the Norman Conquest became a central preoccupation of seventeenth-century historiography, because on it hinged the authority of the ruling institutions of the day, from the King and nobility to the jury system and the lords of the manor.⁶⁰ The antiquity of the House of Commons, the meaning of Magna Carta and the origin of urban municipalities were all issues integrally connected with the political conflicts of the age. 'The chief use of this profession,' wrote Charles I's future secretary of state, 'is now the defence of one church, and therein of one state . . . Wherefore in my poor opinion it is now as necessary to have diligent historians as learned divines.'⁶¹

The inextricable association between historical research and political controversy is epitomised by the indomitable figure of William Prynne, picking his way through the 'filthy and unpleasant' records in the Tower, and then sitting down, with a long quilt cap over his eyes to protect them from the light, with a man to bring him a roll and a pot of ale every three hours, to turn out yet another polemical volume of constitutional history, crowded with marginal references to unpublished documents.⁶²

⁵⁹ There is a huge amount of writing on the antiquarian movement. Much of it is summed up in such recent publications as *English County Histories. A Guide*, ed. C. R. J. Currie and C. P. Lewis (Far Thrupp, Stroud, 1994); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time. English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995); Jan Broadway, *William Dugdale and the Significance of County History in Early Stuart England* (Dugdale Soc., Occasional Papers, 1999); and Theodor Harmsen, *Antiquarianism in the Augustan Age. Thomas Hearne 1678–1735* (Oxford, Bern, et al., 2000).

⁶⁰ David Douglas, *The Norman Conquest and British Historians* (Glasgow, 1946); Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (reissue, Cambridge, 1987).

⁶¹ Sir John Coke, in Norman Farmer, Jr., 'Fulke Greville and Sir John Coke: an Exchange of Letters on a History Lecture and Certain Latin Verses on Sir Philip Sidney', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, xxxiii (1969–70), pp. 220–1. It was Coke who conveyed to John Selden Charles I's request that he publish his treatise on England's claims to dominion over the seas; D. M. Barratt, 'The publication of John Selden's *Mare Clausum*', *The Bodleian Library Record*, vii (1962–7).

⁶² William Lamont, *Marginal Prynne 1600–1669* (1963), p. 229; 'Brief Lives,' chiefly of *Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898), ii. 174. Hearne subsequently

In all three areas of inquiry—Christianity, classical antiquity, and the English past—it was axiomatic that the purpose of scholarship was public utility. It was meant to be useful, not just to artists and writers, but to men of action.⁶³ As the first Camden professor told Oxford University, the principal end of history was not knowledge or contemplation, but practice.⁶⁴ Protestants disliked the contemplative ideal, which they associated with monks and popery, and they regarded self-indulgent research for private amusement as reprehensible: a scholar should not just think of ‘the sweetness of his studies’ and ‘his own quietness and pleasure’.⁶⁵ He had a duty to publish his results, so that others might benefit.⁶⁶ John Foxe applauded the ‘great and manifold fruits which daily ensue by the studies of good men, to the public utility of the common wealth,’⁶⁷ while the

commented that Prynne’s works retained their value ‘because he commonly cites his vouchers for what he delivers, and thereby gives his reader an opportunity of examining the truth of them’; *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, ed. C. E. Doble *et al.* (Oxford Historical Soc., 1885–1921), vii. 41. Aubrey, however, says that Prynne was ‘much blamed for his unfaithful quotations’ (*Brief Lives*, ii. 174).

⁶³ Simeon Ashe said of Thomas Gataker that his studies were designed ‘not to a mere entertainment of himself in a quiet privacy, but to the public benefit of the present Church and posterity’; *Gray Hayres crowned with Grace*, p. 53. For other examples: *Vives: On Education*, trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 283–4; Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named the Governour* (1531) (Everyman’s Library, 1907), p. 293; Richard Mulcaster, *The First Part of the Elementarie* (1582), ed. E. T. Campagnac (Oxford, 1925), pp. 13–14; Fulke Greville, ‘A Treatise of Humane Learning’, in *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (Edinburgh and London, 1939), i. 170–1; Levine, *Humanism and History*, pp. 99–100.

See, more generally, E. Harris Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (New York, 1956; Grand Rapids, MI, 1983), pp. 158, 161, 164; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978), i. 218–21; Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities. Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century Europe* (1986), p. 197.

⁶⁴ Wheare, *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories*, p. 299. Lord Brooke, the founder of a similar lecturership at Cambridge, explained that its ‘main end and scope’ was ‘the use and application’ of human learning to ‘the practice of life’; Kevin Sharpe, ‘The foundation of the chairs of history at Oxford and Cambridge: an episode in Jacobean politics’, *History of the Universities*, ii (1982), p. 139. The Earl of Newcastle urged the future Charles II to read history ‘so you might compare the dead with the living; for the same humours is now as was then; there is no alteration but in names’; *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ed. Henry Ellis (1st ser., 2nd edn., 1825), iii. 288.

⁶⁵ Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, ed. T. F. Mayer (Camden, 4th ser., 37, 1989), p. 2.

⁶⁶ Daniel Bartolus, *The Learned Man Defended and Reform’d*, trans. Thomas Salusbury (1660), pp. 325–33. It would, nevertheless, be possible to compile a long list of early modern scholars who were reluctant to publish and whose learning died with them.

⁶⁷ Dedication of *The Gospels of the fower Evangelistes*, sig. Aij. Cf. Robert Crowley’s advice to the scholar: ‘Call thou therefore to memory/What knowledge thy country doth lack, / And apply the same earnestly’; *The Select Works of Robert Crowley*, ed. J. M. Cowper (Early English Text Society, 1872), p. 72.

learned bishop Edward Stillingfleet was praised for putting his knowledge to use, rather than ‘heaping up a vast mass of learning, and then lying buried, as it were, in the midst of it’.⁶⁸

Scholarly reading tended to be pragmatic and purposeful. Excerpts were copied into commonplace books and used as maxims at time of need.⁶⁹ Public figures often took advice from scholars;⁷⁰ Sir Robert Cotton was repeatedly asked to assist Jacobean policy-makers by examining the medieval past for useful precedents.⁷¹ Antiquarian learning was of practical value in the exploitation of landed estates; the Anglo-Saxonist, William Somner, found that, ‘upon the great questions in descent of families, tenure of estates, dedication of churches, right of tithes, and all the history of use and custom, he was consulted as a Druid or Bard’.⁷² Scholarship, in short, was not supposed to be an end in itself. Those who devoted their lives to learning were expected to produce results which would be of assistance to others. Scholars were not like modern Fellows of the British Academy, writing to impress each other. They were more like the ‘*ulemā*’ of learned Muslims, ready to make public pronouncements at times of crisis.

The avowed purpose of study was the recovery of useful wisdom from the past. If it was not useful, there was no point in pursuing it. Late in life, Ussher told John Evelyn that he regretted having lost so much time in the study of oriental languages, because, ‘excepting Hebrew, there was little fruit to be gathered of exceeding labour; that besides some mathematical

⁶⁸ *Life* (by Richard Bentley, who had been his chaplain), prefixed to *The Works of . . . Dr Edw. Stillingfleet* (1710), i. 44.

⁶⁹ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, ‘“Studies for Action”: How Gabriel Harvey read his Livy’, *Past and Present*, 129 (1990); William H. Sherman, *John Dee. The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, MA, 1995), p. 65; Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions. The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (2000); D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), chap. 2. See, in general, Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford, 1996).

⁷⁰ Lisa Jardine and William Sherman, ‘Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in late Elizabethan England’, in *Religion, Culture and Society in early modern Britain*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge, 1994); R. Malcolm Smuts, *Culture and Power in England, 1585–1685* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1999), p. 37.

⁷¹ For an informative list of occasions see Thomas Smith, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library 1696*, ed. C. G. C. Tite (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 32–5. Also Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton*, chaps. iv and v; and *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector. Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and his Legacy*, ed. C. J. Wright (1997), pp. 24–5, 70–7.

⁷² White Kennett, ‘The Life of Mr Somner’, prefaced to William Somner, *A Treatise of the Roman Ports and Forts in Kent* (Oxford, 1693), p. 11. Cf. Roger B. Manning, ‘Antiquarianism and the seigneurial reaction: Sir Robert and Sir Thomas Cotton and their tenants’, *Historical Research*, 63 (1990), and ‘Sir Robert Cotton, Antiquarianism and Estate Administration: a Chancery Decree of 1627’, in *Sir Robert Cotton as a Collector*, ed. Wright.

books, the Arabic itself had little considerable'.⁷³ John Worthington, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, confessed that his enthusiasm for Arabic, Persian, and Coptic had cooled when he discovered that, in the absence of printed books, they had to be studied in manuscript, and that, anyway, 'there was no treasure of things to be come at'.⁷⁴ Sir Thomas Pope Blount thought that the time others had spent, laboriously deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics, was completely wasted, since all they contained were 'childish fooleries'.⁷⁵

There was little notion here of exploring past societies for their own sake, little concern with cultural history or historical ethnography. John Lightfoot reconstructed the world of ancient Judaism so as to understand the New Testament; John Selden studied Hebrew marriage because he wanted to reform the English law of divorce; and John Spencer examined Jewish law so as to illuminate God's commandments. None of them was interested in Jewish culture as such.⁷⁶ Among English orientalists, Edward Pococke seems to have been exceptional in admiring Arabic poetry for its own sake, but his essential reason for studying the subject was religious.⁷⁷ In the later seventeenth century, Arabic learning declined, because its astronomy and mathematics were becoming out of date, while its potential for Biblical study seemed to have been fully exploited by the Polyglot Bible.⁷⁸ Anglo-Saxon studies went into a similar decline when the Church of England no longer needed their support.

⁷³ *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. de Beer (Oxford, 1955), iii. 156 (21 August 1655).

⁷⁴ *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr John Worthington*, ed. James Crossley and Richard Copley Christie (Chetham Soc., 1847–86), ii (part 1), p. 26. In about 1647, Isaac Barrow and Samuel Sprint, young students at Trinity College, Cambridge, wishing to learn Arabic, approached Abraham Wheelock, the University's Lecturer in the subject. 'But upon hearing how great difficulties they were to encounter, and how few books were in that language, and the little advantage that could be got by it, they laid aside their design'; Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr Baxter's History of His Life and Times* (2nd edn., 1713), ii. 340.

⁷⁵ *Sir Tho. Pope Blount's Essays on Several Subjects*, 3rd impressn. (1697), pp. 154–7 (also citing Stillingfleet, who thought it all 'labour lost').

⁷⁶ Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, pp. 80–1; Feingold in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 450–2.

⁷⁷ Holt, *Studies in the History of the Near East*, pp. 20–2, 29; Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, pp. 161, 225, 311; Leonard Twells, 'The Life of Dr Edward Pocock', in *The Lives of Dr Edward Pocock . . . Dr Zachary Pearce . . . Dr Thomas Newton . . . and of the Rev. Philip Skelton*, ed. A. C. (1816), i. 344–5. Outlining his programme of oriental research in 1675, Thomas Hyde observed that 'the end of all our studies ought to tend to the glory of God'; I. G. Philip, 'Letter from Thomas Hyde, Bodley's Librarian, 1665–1701', *The Bodleian Library Record*, iii (1950–1), p. 44.

⁷⁸ Holt, *Studies in the History of the Near East*, pp. 19–21; Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, pp. 175, 277, 309–12; Feingold in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 497–503.

It is hardly surprising that so much learned work in this period was related to immediate issues of a theological kind, since scholars were highly dependent on the Church's patronage. Promising boys from humble origins were spotted by local clergy or gentry and sent to university. After that, they might stay on for a time with a college fellowship. But such posts were poorly paid, incompatible with marriage and essentially temporary. Some scholars might eventually become heads of colleges or hold a professorship. Others sought employment in noble or gentry households as tutors, secretaries or librarians. Most fell back on some form of ecclesiastical preferment. The support of appropriate kinds of scholarship was one of the Church's accepted objectives;⁷⁹ and a blind eye was turned towards incumbents who, like Bentley at Hartlebury, left their pastoral duties to a curate, while they got on with their learned work.⁸⁰ The best scholars could hope to become bishops; and bishops in turn maintained young scholars in their households. Supported by the Church, they inevitably deployed their learning on its behalf, turning away from the classical scholarship on which they had been reared to concentrate on the Bible, patristics, and church history.⁸¹

The alternative source of patronage was the nobility and gentry, many of whom had excellent libraries and were seriously interested in historical learning. Most of the county and family histories were written by gentlemen with private means or by antiquarians enjoying their financial support. Here too, though, there was a distinct agenda. The authors of such works acknowledged their debts to their patrons in their prefaces and dedications, and flattered them by narrating the noble deeds of their ancestors and the history of their families and estates.

Without an interested patron or a bookseller willing to take the financial risk, works of learning would remain unpublished.⁸² Joshua Barnes, Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, was reduced to persuading his

⁷⁹ White Kennett suggested in 1693 that it would 'spread the glory of the English Church and Nation, if, among divines addicted to these studies, some one were prefer'd to a dignity in every collegiate church, on condition to employ his talent in the history and antiquities of that body, of which he was a grateful and an useful member'; 'The Life of Mr Somner', pp. 21–2.

⁸⁰ Ernest Harold Pearce, *Hartlebury Castle* (1926), p. 174.

⁸¹ Feingold in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 265–9.

⁸² Examples include John Aubrey's 'Brief Lives' and 'Monumenta Britannica' (cf. the comments of William Nicolson, *The English, Scotch and Irish Historical Libraries*, 3rd edn. (1736), p. 39); Arabic works by William Bedwell (Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, pp. 24–5); Anglo-Saxon studies by the Elstobs (Sarah H. Collins, 'The Elstobs and the End of the Saxon Revival', in Berkhout and Gatch, *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship*, p. 116); and innumerable works of local antiquarianism (Parry, *Trophies of Time*, pp. 16–17).

rich wife to finance his edition of the *Iliad* (1710) by assuring her that it was written by King Solomon.⁸³ Much antiquarian scholarship was the work of well-to-do lawyers and heralds, who combined research with their professional duties; and the greatest scholars tended to be financially independent. Sir Henry Spelman published his historical glossary, *Archaeologus*, at his own expense; he had been a lawyer before taking up learning at the age of nearly fifty.⁸⁴ John Selden was steward to the Earl of Kent and, when the Earl died, was supported by his wealthy widow. John Aubrey's financial affairs fell into utter confusion, but he somehow managed to afford to pursue his idiosyncratic, but brilliantly original, programme of research into biography, archaeology and folklore.⁸⁵ There were a few autodidacts of humble status, like Henry Wild, 'the Arabic tailor' from Norwich, who taught himself nine learned languages, or John Bagford, the London cobbler, who became the leading authority on the history of early printing.⁸⁶ But most scholarship was firmly in the control of the university-educated and their patrons: the Church and the gentry.

It is no wonder that the excluded, unable to swap classical tags or argue about medieval history or dispute a biblical translation, were sometimes moved to question the necessity of all this learning. In the Civil War period many sectaries dismissed the learned languages as irrelevant to the formation of godly ministers: that required divine inspiration, not human erudition. Why should one admire linguistic expertise when Pontius Pilate himself was, notoriously, able to compose an inscription in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin?⁸⁷

In the eyes of some radicals, so-called 'learning' was just an excuse for the lucrative preferment of a clerical caste. It was 'the best trade in England', thought the Leveller, Richard Overton, pointing to that great

⁸³ [The] D[ictionary of] N[ational] B[iography], s.n. 'Barnes, Joshua'.

⁸⁴ *The English Works of Sir Henry Spelman*, ed. Edmund Gibson (1723), sigs. a2, a3.

⁸⁵ Michael Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (1975), remains the unsurpassed account.

⁸⁶ William Dunn Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian Library Oxford* (Oxford, 1890), pp. 194–5; John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (1812–15), ii. 462–5; Milton McC. Gatch, 'John Bagford, Bookseller and Antiquary', *The British Library Journal*, 12 (1986).

⁸⁷ *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. Norman Penney (Cambridge, 1911), i. 311; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (1646), i. 30–1, and iii. 9, 45; [Bruno Ryves], *Mercurius Rusticus* (1685), i. 32 ('it were a happy thing if there were no universities'). The Elizabethan sectaries had shared some of these views: e.g., *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587–1590*, ed. Leland H. Carlson (1962), pp. 343–6, 349–50, 535–9. See, in general, Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972), pp. 242–4, and id., *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (revd. edn., 1991), chap. 5.

'ulemā, the Westminster Assembly of 'Learned, Godly and Judicious Divines', summoned in 1643 to settle the government of the Church, its members enjoying, in addition to their benefices, an attendance allowance of four shillings a day.⁸⁸ 'What can any judicious man make of [learning],' asked his colleague, William Walwyn, 'but as an art to deceive and abuse?' Why else were university men 'pleaders for absurdities in government' and 'arguers for tyranny'? Why, if not out of self-interest, did they claim that their linguistic skills gave them a uniquely privileged understanding of scripture?⁸⁹ The Digger, Gerrard Winstanley, urged that there should be no separate class called 'scholars', 'trained up only to book learning, and no other employment, . . . for . . . through idleness, and exercised wit therein, they spend their time to find out policies to advance themselves, to be Lords and Masters above their labouring brethren'.⁹⁰ Later Royalist commentators looked back on the Interregnum with horror as a time that 'hated all antiquity, ecclesiastical and civil';⁹¹ and they hailed Charles II's restoration as the return not just of the King and bishops, but also of learning.⁹²

For the ruling establishment, scholarship possessed an obvious utility: political, religious, and social. The motives of the learned themselves, however, were more mixed. The biographer of Europe's most celebrated scholar tells us that Joseph Scaliger 'wanted fame and honour more than truth'.⁹³ Emulation was basic to the educational system of the time and students were brought up to be highly competitive. The young John Milton believed that 'a desire of honour and repute, and immortal fame' was 'seated in the breast of every true scholar';⁹⁴ while the great

⁸⁸ [Richard Overton], *The Arraignment of Mr. Persecution* (1645), p. 36, in *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 1638–1647*, ed. William Haller (New York, 1934), iii. 246; *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (1911), i. 183.

⁸⁹ 'The Power of Love' (1643), in *The Writings of William Walwyn*, ed. Jack R. McMichael and Barbara Taft (1989), pp. 95–6.

⁹⁰ *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, ed. George H. Sabine (Ithaca, NY, 1941), p. 577.

⁹¹ Kennett, 'The Life of Mr Somner', p. 47. Kennett claimed (p. 83) that the most notable works of learning published during that period—Sir Roger Twysden's *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores Decem* (1652), Walton's Polyglot Bible (1654–7), William Dugdale's *Monasticum Anglicanum* (1655–61), and William Somner's *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum* (1659)—were all by royalist sympathisers or 'poor ejected Church-men'.

⁹² Kennett, 'Life of Somner', pp. 47–8. Thereafter, suggests Dr Jeremy Gregory, 'the historical, linguistic, and textual studies of the day were part of a sustained endeavour to defend the existing order.' *Restoration, Reformation and Reform, 1660–1828. Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000), p. 57.

⁹³ Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, i. 227.

⁹⁴ *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe *et al.* (New Haven, CT, 1953–83), i. 319–20.

eighteenth-century orientalist, Sir William Jones, wrote of ‘the one thing which I desire to distraction, glory. Glory I shall pursue through fire and water, by night and by day.’⁹⁵ This was an age when the learned figures of Europe were publicly celebrated, their presence sought at royal courts and foreign universities, their effigies painted on library friezes⁹⁶ and their careers lauded in works of reference.⁹⁷ Inevitably, many sought learning in the hope of immortality.⁹⁸ ‘I am quite satisfied,’ Richard Porson would say, ‘if, three hundred years hence, it shall be said that “one Porson lived towards the close of the eighteenth century, who did a good deal for the text of Euripides”.’⁹⁹

Yet most of those who followed the life of learning seem to have done so because of its intrinsic attractions.¹⁰⁰ They were drawn to it by what they called their ‘natural genius’;¹⁰¹ only subsequently did they develop a religious or political justification for their work. ‘The extreme pleasure I take in study,’ wrote Thomas Hobbes, ‘overcomes in me all other appetites.’¹⁰² Anthony Wood regarded the study of antiquities as ‘his natural genie and could not avoid it’; it was ‘the happiness of his life’

⁹⁵ *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon (Oxford, 1970), i. 86–7.

⁹⁶ André Masson, *The Pictorial Catalogue. Mural Decoration in Libraries*, trans. David Gerard (Oxford, 1981), pp. 1–11; J. N. L. Myres, ‘The Painted Frieze in the Picture Gallery’, *The Bodleian Library Record*, iii (1950–1); ‘Thomas James and the Painted Frieze’, *ibid.*, iv (1952–3); and (with E. Clive Rouse), ‘Further Notes on the Painted Frieze and other Discoveries in the Upper Reading Room and the Tower Room’, *ibid.*, v (1954–6). See also Peter Burke, ‘Reflections on the frontispiece portrait in the Renaissance’, in *Bildnis und Image. Das Portrait zwischen Intention und Rezeption*, ed. Andreas Köstler and Ernst Seidl (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1998).

⁹⁷ e.g., Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of Religion and Learning, and of Religious and Learned Men* (1656); Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*; Thomas-Pope Blount, *Censura Celebriorum Authorum* (1690); Bayle, *Dictionary*; [Jean Pierre Nicéron et al.], *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des hommes illustres dans la République des Lettres*, 43 vols. (Paris, 1729–45).

⁹⁸ Richard Baxter thought that too many hours were devoted to study and too many books written by those whose sole objective was to gain the reputation of being learned men; *The Practical Works of the Late Reverend and Pious Mr Richard Baxter* (1707), iii. 407. As a young man, his own ambition has been for ‘*Literate Fame . . . the highest academical degrees and reputation of learning*’; *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (1696), i. 5. On immortality as a goal of scholarly labours, Leigh, *A Treatise of Religion and Learning*, p. 30.

⁹⁹ *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, first collected by Alexander Dyce, ed. Morchard Bishop (1952), pp. 183–4.

¹⁰⁰ On the pleasures of learning and inquiry, see, e.g., ‘Mr Bacon in Praise of Knowledge’, in *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding (1861–74), i. 123; *The Works of . . . Joseph Hall*, ed. Philip Wynter (Oxford, 1863), vi. 222–5; *The Works of Isaac Barrow* (Edinburgh, 1842), i. 494; Levine, *Humanism and History*, p. 100.

¹⁰¹ e.g. William Burton, *The Description of Leicester Shire* (1622), ‘To the Reader’, sig. ¶2r; F. M. Powicke, ‘Notes on Hastings Manuscripts’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, i (1938), p. 252 (William Dugdale); Bodleian Library, MS Top. Gen. c 24, fol. 23 (John Aubrey).

¹⁰² Thomas Hobbes, *The Correspondence*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford, 1994), i. 37.

when he was admitted to Arts End in the Bodleian.¹⁰³ Future scholars often revealed themselves in their childhood, like Humphrey Wanley, who at an early age developed a passionate interest in deciphering old manuscripts. Such people were driven less by any sense of social utility than by the ‘delight’ their studies brought them.¹⁰⁴ Others studied because doing so took their minds off less agreeable matters and compensated for personal frustrations.

In savage foot-notes on unjust editions
He timidly attacked the life he led.¹⁰⁵

Scholarly labours were conventionally described as ‘herculean’.¹⁰⁶ William Dugdale, who said that his ‘delight’ in his work carried him through all discouragements and difficulties, could work for thirteen hours without stopping.¹⁰⁷ The Cambridge orientalist, Edmund Castell, put in up to eighteen hours a day on his *Lexicon Heptaglotton*.¹⁰⁸ Twelve to sixteen hours was standard. To avoid falling asleep, John Pearson worked in a cold room, with a blanket over his shoulders.¹⁰⁹ Some read and wrote standing up. Henry Hammond seldom ate more than once in twenty-four hours and was content with four or five hours’ sleep; he perused a book when walking and a servant read to him while he was dressing.¹¹⁰

It was an accepted classical doctrine that the desire for knowledge was a natural appetite and its pursuit the highest form of human activity.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford Hist. Soc., 1891–1900), i. 182.

¹⁰⁴ e.g., *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D’Ewes*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (1845), ii. 110; Leigh, *A Treatise of Religion and Learning*, p. 30; Elizabeth Elstob, *The Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue* (1715), p. ii. Cf. John Donne, *Essays in Divinity*, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson (Oxford, 1952), 56: ‘For naturally great wits affect the reading of obscure books, wrestle and sweat in the explication of prophecies, dig and thresh out the words of unlegible hands, resuscitate and bring to life again the mangled, and lame fragmentary images and characters in marbles and medals, because they have a joy and complacency in the victory and achievement thereof.’

¹⁰⁵ W. H. Auden, ‘A. E. Housman’ (1938), in *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson, revd. edn. (1991), p. 182.

¹⁰⁶ Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc’s Europe. Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (2000), p. 130.

¹⁰⁷ Powicke, ‘Notes on Hastings Manuscripts’, pp. 252–3; *The Life, Diary, and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale*, ed. William Hamper (1827), p. 236.

¹⁰⁸ Edmund Castell, *Lexicon Heptaglotton* (1669), sig. a2v. Cf. the comments of John Worthington; *Diary and Correspondence*, ed. Crossley and Christie, ii (part 1), pp. 21–2.

¹⁰⁹ *The Minor Theological Works of John Pearson*, ed. Edward Churton (Oxford, 1844), i, p. xviii.

¹¹⁰ John Fell, *The Life of the Most Learned, Reverend and Pious Dr H. Hammond* (1661), pp. 109, 106, 112.

¹¹¹ Aristotle *Metaphysics*, 980a (and Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle. Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, trans. Richard Robinson (2nd edn., Oxford, 1948), pp. 68–71); *Eudemian Ethics*, 1244b; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177a–1178a; Cicero, *De Officiis*, i. 13.

The intensity and precision of philological and antiquarian studies in early modern Europe far exceeded anything required for immediate application; and there were always scholars who pursued recondite topics for their own sake.¹¹² Those whose motives were more practical found, ironically, that the ultimate effect of their labours was to invalidate the original purpose of their inquiries. For the more they discovered about the classical or medieval periods, the more exotically different did the past appear and the harder it became to draw analogies with the contemporary world.¹¹³ This was the great transformation in historical scholarship. The past, which was originally studied for the precedents it could afford and the lessons it taught, gradually came to be perceived as an independent cultural domain, too alien to offer immediate guidance and too coherent to permit exemplary fragments and maxims to be pulled out of their original context.¹¹⁴ In the early modern period, this new attitude co-existed with the older one. The same antiquaries who tried to draw lessons from the past also demonstrated its irredeemable otherness.¹¹⁵ In the end it became apparent that historical erudition had to be appreciated for its own sake or not at all.

In early modern England, the idea of scholarship for scholarship's sake was slow to be explicitly formulated,¹¹⁶ but it was everywhere

¹¹² Politian is the most frequently-cited example; see N. G. Wilson *From Byzantium to Italy. Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (1992), p. 113; Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, i. 40–1; and id., *Defenders of the Text*, pp. 72–3.

¹¹³ The French humanist, Louis Le Roy, observed of the Greek and Latin authors that 'there are few agreeable to the present manners and affairs. We do not build nowadays to the fashion of Vitruvius; neither till the ground nor plant according to Varro or Columella; nor take foods or physic after the ordinance of Hippocrates and Galen. We judge not according to the Civil Law of the Romans, neither plead we as did Demosthenes or Cicero, or govern our commonwealths by the laws of Solon and Lycurgus, or following the politic precepts of Plato and Aristotle. We sing not as did the ancients; neither war we according to Vegetius, the art military being changed, and all kind of arms, both offensive and defensive'; *Of the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things in the Whole World*, trans. R(obert) A(shley) (1594; French original, 1576), fol. 128.

¹¹⁴ D. J. Gordon, *The Renaissance Imagination*, ed. Stephen Orgel (1975), p. 23; Grafton, *Defenders of the Text*, pp. 40–1, 73; id., *Joseph Scaliger*, i. 40–1; ii. 377; Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books. History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (1991), *passim*.

¹¹⁵ Grafton, *Defenders of the Text*, pp. 34–41, and id., *Bring Out Your Dead. The Past as Revelation* (2001), pp. 242–3.

¹¹⁶ Though Hobbes declared that curiosity distinguished men from beasts and that it was brutish to ask of a new discovery what it was good for (*The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Sir William Molesworth (1839–45), vii. 467–8), while Robert Hooke defended knowledge for knowledge's sake; Michael Hunter in *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and Richard H. Popkin (1991), pp. 198–9. Assertions about the natural human appetite for knowledge were commonplace.

implicit.¹¹⁷ Much antiquarian writing reflected no immediate need, save family pride or local patriotism; amateur archaeology was driven by pure curiosity; and many works of philology had no ulterior motive, save perhaps the dethronement of an older scholar.¹¹⁸ Even when their origins were frankly polemical, learned inquiries tended to be propelled by their own momentum, rapidly transcending their immediate origins.¹¹⁹ In their prefaces, scholars emphasised the moral utility and contemporary relevance of their work, because that was what their patrons wanted to hear. But what drove them on was intellectual curiosity and the pleasure of discovery. In the same way, modern students of, say, medieval architecture will find it prudent, when seeking public funding, to stress not the intrinsic importance of their work, but its incidental value for the tourist industry.¹²⁰

Many early modern scholars had a strong sense of vocation. They readily endured the sacrifices their work demanded: the unremitting application and the long periods of solitude and self-denial. They admired those of their colleagues who were strong-minded enough to decline bishoprics or headships of colleges which would have distracted them from their work.¹²¹ Many were ascetic in their lives, and misogynist, resenting the distraction of wives and children.¹²² A typical role-model

¹¹⁷ Sir Geoffrey Elton thought that 'sixteenth-century historians and antiquarians quite often came to occupy themselves with study for its own sake'; 'Tudor Historians', *The Listener*, 86 (1971), p. 437.

¹¹⁸ On inter-generational hostility as the spur to scholarship, see, e.g., *The Works of . . . William Fleetwood* (new edn., Oxford, 1854), i. 198.

¹¹⁹ As Douglas (*English Scholars*, p. 210) observes of Edmund Gibson, Humphrey Hody, White Kennett, William Nicolson and William Wake. On the relentless growth of disinterested learning, even when 'carried on under some colourable masquerade of practicality', see the sagacious remarks of Thorstein Veblen in *The Higher Learning in America. A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* [New York, 1918, but written earlier], p. 37, in *The Complete Works of Thorstein Veblen*, vi (1994).

¹²⁰ 'The man of the world—that is to say, of the business world—puts the question, What is the use of this learning? And the men who speak for learning, and even the scholars occupied with the "humanities" are at pains to find some colourable answer that shall satisfy the worldly-wise that this learning for which they speak is in some way useful for pecuniary gain. If he were not himself infected with the pragmatism of the market-place, the scholar's answer would have to be: Get thee behind me!'; Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America*, p. 200.

¹²¹ John Rainolds declined a bishopric; William Camden refused a mastership of requests; James Ussher turned down the provostship and, later, the chancellorship of Trinity College, Dublin; Henry More chose to remain a fellow of Christ's, Cambridge, rejecting the mastership, the deanery of Christ Church, the provostship of Trinity College, Dublin, the deanery of St Patrick's and two bishoprics.

¹²² Bayle remarked that, although their *éloges* and biographies always asserted that married scholars lived in peaceful harmony with their wives, who were invariably women of great merit and peaceable temper, 'the neighbourhood frequently know the contrary'; *Dictionary*, iii. 437 n; also i. 796 n. There was a tradition that learned men were not great lovers, or begetters of gifted children, because their vital spirits went to their brains rather than their genitals; Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), p. 172.

was the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus, who was so transported at his study that he would have died of hunger, had his maid not thrust food into his mouth.¹²³ Scholars were often said to have ruined their health and shortened their lives by excessive application.¹²⁴

Of course, the life of learning had its compensations: its defenders noted complacently that it exempted its devotees from ‘bodily toil’ and the company of ‘the vulgar sort’.¹²⁵ Yet it was not meant to bring financial reward, for it was an ancient adage that knowledge should not be bought and sold.¹²⁶ Cynics remarked that scholarship was a recognised route to worldly preferment,¹²⁷ but Anthony Wood thought one of the attractions of antiquarian studies was that they were not conducted for lucre.¹²⁸

Early modern scholars were increasingly self-conscious about their collective identity. Many wrote in Latin for an international audience and maintained a learned correspondence with their European counterparts, exchanging information about books and manuscripts. They saw themselves as members of what they called ‘the Commonwealth of Learning’ or ‘the Commonwealth of Antiquaries’; and were occasionally even capable of cooperating with their religious adversaries.¹²⁹ They developed

¹²³ Sa[muel] Clark[e], *A Mirrou or Looking-Glasse both for Saints, and Sinners*, 3rd edn. (1657), p. 344.

¹²⁴ e.g., *The Whole Sermons of . . . Thomas Playfere* (1623), 5th pagination, p. 221 (Edward Lively); Nelson, *Life of Dr George Bull*, pp. 458, 476; Fell, *Life of Hammond*, pp. 70–1, 234–5; Norman Sykes, *Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London 1669–1748* (Oxford, 1926), p. 68.

¹²⁵ *Works of Isaac Barrow*, i. 492, 493–4 (from his sermon, ‘Of industry in our particular calling as scholars’, an important document in the formation of the ideology of learning).

¹²⁶ Bayle claimed that, in the Republic of Learning, to die poor was the equivalent of a title of honour; *Dictionary*, iii. 340. In medieval Islam, there was a strict separation between learning and the potential corruption of financial reward, because the task of acquiring and transmitting knowledge was a holy one; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, p. 95.

¹²⁷ Francis Bacon thought that the most common motive for the pursuit of learning was ‘for lucre and profession’; *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford, 2000), p. 31. Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *De Homine*, trans. Charles T. Wood *et al.*, and ed. Bernard Gert (Garden City, NY, 1972), p. 49 (xi. 8): ‘The love of riches is greater than the love of wisdom. For commonly the latter is not sought except for the sake of the former.’

¹²⁸ *Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, ed. Clark, i. 183.

¹²⁹ Thomas Coryat wrote of ‘the Common-Weal of Learning’ in 1611; *Coryat’s Crudities; Reprinted from the Edition of 1611* (1776), i. 42. For later references to the ‘Commonwealth of Learning’: Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning*, pp. 66, 94; Bodleian Lib., MS Aubrey 13, fol. 207 (Silas Taylor); C. E. Wright, ‘Humfrey Wanley: Saxonist and Library-Keeper’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xlvi (1960), p. 106; *Original Letters of Eminent Literary Men*, ed. Ellis, p. 210. For the ‘Commonwealth of Antiquaries’, *Diary of Humfrey Wanley*, i, p. xiii. The ‘Republic of Learning’ occurs in John Webster, *Academiarum Examen* (1654), p. 24. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives no English use of the term, ‘Republic of Letters’, before the eighteenth century (though it occurs in Kennett, ‘Life of Mr Somner’, p. 73).

There has been much recent writing on the idea of an international Republic of Letters,

a distinctive scholarly ethic, with internationally recognised standards of argument, citation, and professional integrity.¹³⁰ They had their pantheon of scholar-heroes, whose portraits hung in their studies, and whose biographies, much influenced by the archetypes of Jerome and Erasmus, took on an exemplary character.¹³¹ In the later seventeenth century it was common for them to refer to other scholars as ‘great men’.¹³²

For the scholar had a moral authority. As in Judaism and Islam, scholarship was a religious activity, the study of God’s laws for man. It was a sanctifying task, for knowledge was a necessary condition of acting well; and most Christian humanists thought that classical learning helped people to attain moral excellence.¹³³ Thomas Madox, historian of the

much of it inspired by hopes for the European Union. There is a useful bibliography in Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des Lettres* (Paris, 1997). Early modern English scholars were mostly too partisan to fit this model, though Camden, Cotton, Selden, and Spelman complied with a request by the English Benedictines in Douai for an opinion on the antiquity of their order and the monks, ‘Leander à Sancto Martino’ (John Jones) and Augustine Baker, were given access to Cotton’s library; Baker used the opportunity to have an argument with James Ussher about image-worship; Smith, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library*, ed. Tite, pp. 45–6; *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker*, ed. Justin McCann and Hugh Connolly (Catholic Record Society, 1933), pp. 111–12.

¹³⁰ Bayle’s *Dictionary* seems to have been particularly important in defining and codifying this. He offered firm prescriptions on the need to provide tables of contents and indexes (ii. 366 n), along with proper citations of sources used, including full page references (ii. 136 n; v. 325 n).

¹³¹ The importance of Jerome and Erasmus as archetypal images of the scholar is emphasised by Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters. The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton, NJ, 1993). Other influential biographical models included the *Lyfe of John Picus Erle of Myrandula* [c.1510] (in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, i, ed. Anthony G. Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers and Clarence H. Miller (1997)); Fulgentio Micanzio’s life of Paolo Sarpi (Leiden, 1646), trans. as *The Life of the Most Learned Father Paul* (1651); and Pierre Gassendi’s life of Peiresc (Paris, 1641), trans. by William Rand as *The Mirrour of True Nobility and Gentility* (1657). Some other humanist biographies are listed by Burke, ‘Reflections on the frontispiece portrait in the Renaissance’, pp. 157–60. Notable English equivalents include Thomas Smith’s *Gulielmi Camdeni Vita*, prefaced to *V. Cl. Camdeni et Illustrium Virorum ad G. Camdenum Epistolae* (1691), and White Kennett’s, ‘Life of Mr Somner’ (1693). Thomas Tanner said that the latter converted him to the scholarly life. Peiresc’s life did the same for Wanley; *Letters of Humfrey Wanley. Palaeographer, Anglo-Saxonist, Librarian 1672–1726*, ed. P. L. Heyworth (Oxford, 1989), p. 7.

¹³² e.g., ‘A Gentleman’ [Thomas Baker], *Reflections upon Learning* (1699), p. 31; Richard Bentley, *A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1699), pp. lxxx, xcvi, ci, 13; Nelson, *Life of Dr George Bull*, p. 402; [Francis Lee], *Memoirs of the Life of Mr John Kettlewell* (1718), pp. 55–6, 317; Harmsen, *Antiquarianism in the Augustan Age*, p. 154. Cf. *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, v. 97 (on how David Wilkins ‘would fain be looked upon and accounted a very great man’).

¹³³ Rice, *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*, pp. 35–6, 159; Kalyan K. Chatterjee, *In Praise of Learning. John Colet and Literary Humanism in Education* (New Delhi, 1974), p. 81. On the ‘moral drive’ behind the Renaissance study of classical archaeology, see the editors’ comments in Pirro Ligorio’s *Roman Antiquities. The Drawings in MS XIII.B.7 in the National Library in*

medieval exchequer, declared in 1711 that: 'Writing of history is in some sort a religious act. It imports solemnity and sacredness: and ought to be undertaken with purity and rectitude of mind.'¹³⁴

In practice, alas, scholars were notoriously irritable and bad at human relations. 'Scarce two great scholars in an age,' wrote Robert Burton, 'but with bitter invectives they fall foul one on the other.'¹³⁵ Nevertheless, it was widely believed that learning brought a sense of perspective and a consciousness of human transience which were powerful antidotes to personal vanity. 'None ever saw a great scholar arrogant,' wrote John Smyth of Nibley, 'for the more he knows, the more of his weakness he understands.'¹³⁶

Yet many onlookers were quick to observe that the greatest clerks were not the wisest men. 'Shall a man be accounted wise,' asked William Fleetwood in 1701, 'because he . . . can number up the consuls in their order, and can, it may be, prove in many sheets that such a one's name is mistaken a syllable more or less, and his year assigned to him too soon by three or four?'¹³⁷ The erudite seemed unworldly and impractical: persons

Naples, ed. Erna Mandowsky and Charles Mitchell (1963), p. 49. On learning as ancillary to religion, see, e.g., Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, p. 55; Thomas Gataker, *Abrahams Decease* (1627), p. 3; Ashe, *Gray Hayres Crowned with Glory*, p. 55; *Works of Joseph Hall*, vi. 224; [Bathsua Makin], *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673; Augustan Reprint Soc., Los Angeles, CA, 1980), p. 15; Thomas Bray, *An Essay towards Promoting all Necessary and Useful Knowledge* (1697), 'To the Reader', sig. A2v; and, more generally, Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850*, pp. 15, 74; M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago, IL, 1939; Gloucester, MA, 1963), pp. 466–8, 476; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind. The Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1939; Boston, MA, 1961), pp. 76, 83–4; Miller, *Peiresc's Europe*, esp. p. 119.

¹³⁴ Thomas Madox, *The History and Antiquities of the Exchequer* (1711), 'Prefatory Epistle', p. iii. William Nicolson thought that searchers for Roman inscriptions should be 'men of probity, . . . religiously scrupulous'; *The English, Scotch and Irish Historical Libraries*, i. 40.

¹³⁵ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner *et al.* (Oxford, 1989–2000), i. 266. For typical censoriousness about learned 'blunders', see Bentley, *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris*, p. 230. On the 'peevishness and austerity (both in . . . style and manners) . . . commonly incident to antiquaries', Nicolson, *English, Scotch and Irish Historical Libraries*, i. 156.

¹³⁶ John Smyth, of Nibley, *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. Sir John Maclean (*The Berkeley Manuscripts*, Gloucester, 1883–5), ii. 245. Cf. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, ed. Kiernan, p. 18: 'Learning endueth men's minds with a true sense of the frailty of their persons, the casualty of their fortunes, and the dignity of their soul and vocation; so that it is impossible for them to esteem that any greatness of their own fortune can be a true and worthy end of their being and ordainment'; and Miller, *Peiresc's Europe*, pp. 146–7. Francis Brokesby, however, thought that humility was 'a vertue often wanting in persons of eminent learning'; *Life of Mr Henry Dodwell*, p. 530.

¹³⁷ *The Works of William Fleetwood*, i. 203–4. Cf. William Wotton: 'To pore in old MSS, to compare various readings, to turn over glossaries, and old scholia upon ancient historians, orators and poets, to be minutely critical in all the little fashions of the ancient Greeks and Romans . . . may be good arguments of a man's industry, and willingness to drudge; but seem to signify little to denominate him a great genius, or one who was able to do great things of himself'; *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694; facsimile, Hildesheim, 1968), pp. 316–17.

who had disqualified themselves from the real business of life. Knowledgeable about the past, they could be hugely ignorant of the present. They could measure the heavens and range the world, observed Robert Burton, yet in bargains and contracts they were outwitted by every tradesman.¹³⁸ Peter Heylyn completed his great cosmography of the world, only to spend the night wandering in Bagley Wood, outside Oxford, unable to find his way home.¹³⁹ The idea of the absent-minded professor has a long history; and those who devote their lives to study have always had to endure mockery from others who admire hard-headed practicality and supposedly more virile pursuits.¹⁴⁰

Even before the Civil War, scholars were expected to conceal their learning when in polite company.¹⁴¹ In the later Stuart age, with the triumph of French-style salon culture, gentlemanly distaste for so-called 'pedantry' became increasingly strident.¹⁴² Scholars were notoriously careless in their dress and uncouth in their behaviour.¹⁴³ Spending so much time away from human company, they seldom shone on their rare

¹³⁸ Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, i. 306. Cf. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 'General Prologue', lines 573–5.

¹³⁹ *The Petty-Southwell Correspondence 1676–1687*, ed. Marquis of Lansdowne (1928; repr., New York, 1967), p. 290. This was a joke in poor taste, as Heylyn was nearly blind by this time.

¹⁴⁰ For typical criticisms of learning as impractical and effeminizing: Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), sig. D8; Samuel Daniel, *Musophilus. Containing a Generall Defence of All Learning* (1599), in Samuel Daniel, *Poems and a Defence of Rhyme*, ed. Arthur Colby Sprague (1950), p. 83; Fulke Greville, 'A Treatie of Humane Learning', in *Poems and Dramas*, i. 164; *Original Letters illustrative of English History*, ed. Ellis (1st ser.), iii. 289; Edward Waterhouse, *An Humble Apologie for Learning and Learned Men* (1653), p. 126; Bartolus, *The Learned Man Defended and Reform'd*, pp. 101–2; Henry Fielding, *The Covent-Garden Journal*, ed. Bertram A. Goldgar (Oxford, 1988), p. 239. The idea that wise men could be deficient in practical affairs was an ancient one, to be found in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141b.

¹⁴¹ When King James I met Grotius in 1613, he found him 'so tedious and full of tittle tattle' that he dismissed him as 'some pedant, full of words and of no great judgment'; *Memorials of Affairs of State . . . collected . . . from the Original Papers of . . . Sir Ralph Winwood* (1725), iii. 459. Around 1640, the earl of Newcastle praised Bishop Brian Duppa, because he 'strives as much discreetly to hide the scholar in him . . . and is a right gentleman, such a one as man should be'; *Original Letters illustrative of English History*, ed. Ellis (1st ser.), iii. 288–9.

¹⁴² Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, pp. 184–7. Also Levine, *Humanism and History*, pp. 99–103, 169, 177; Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, pp. 321, 354; Bentley, *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris*, pp. lxxxiii–iv; Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, ed. Karl D. Bülbring (1890), p. 203. In France, the reaction against 'pedantry' had been underway since the 1620s; Alain Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain. Sociologie de la littérature à l'âge classique* (Paris, 1985), pp. 272–3.

¹⁴³ Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, ed. Kiernan, pp. 19–20; Burton, *Anatomy*, i. 304; John Earle, 'A downe-right scholler', in *Micro-cosmographie* (1628); Sir Henry Wotton, *A Philosophical Survey of Education*, ed. H. S. Kermodé (1938), p. 25; Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdom*, trans. George Stanhope, 2nd edn. (1707), ii. 242.

appearances in the drawing-rooms of the elegant; John Selden was exceptional for his suavity and social polish.¹⁴⁴ Scholars tended to regard other people as tiresome interruptions to their work; they suffered from what Mark Pattison would call ‘the irritability engendered by a life of hard reading against time’.¹⁴⁵

So long as learning has an immediate practical utility, these criticisms of scholarly *mores* can be held at bay. But when scholarship appears remote from contemporary concerns, the opposition to ‘pedantry’ will mount. That is what happened in the late seventeenth century, when the works of the ancients were being visibly overtaken by the moderns; when the Anglican Church began to rest its case on reason rather than on the historical study of scriptural and patristic texts; and when political debate was ceasing to rely on legal and constitutional precedent. Devotees of the new natural philosophy were often hostile to philological and historical erudition, boasting, like Thomas Hobbes and William Petty, that, if they had read as many books as other men, they would have known no more than other men.¹⁴⁶ In his account of the Royal Society (1667), Bishop Sprat explained that the philologists had done their job; the classical texts had been restored and it was time to move on.¹⁴⁷ In the following century,

¹⁴⁴ Clarendon wrote that Selden’s ‘humanity, courtesy, and affability was such that he would have been thought to have been bred in the best courts’; *The Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon . . . by himself* (Oxford, 1857), i. 29. The oriental scholar, Edward Bernard, was mocked in fashionable society because of his retiring disposition; *DNB, s.n.*, ‘Bernard, Edward’. Isaac Barrow was ‘careless of his clothes, even to a fault’; Walter Pope, *The Life of Seth Lord Bishop of Salisbury*, ed. J. B. Bamborough (Luttrell Soc., Oxford, 1961), p. 155. Thomas Hearne’s ‘singularity in his exterior behaviour or manner’ was ‘the jest of the man of wit and polite life’; Douglas, *English Scholars*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁵ Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon 1559–1614*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1892), p. 28.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Brief Lives’ by John Aubrey, ed. Clark, i. 349; ii. 144. John Locke also thought that the growth of knowledge had been retarded by ‘an aim and desire to know what hath been other men’s opinions’; ‘Study’ (1677), in Lord King, *The Life of John Locke*, new edn. (1830), i. 174. Cf. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath (1857–9), iv. 254; *Father Malebranche’s Treatise concerning the Search after Truth*, trans. T. Taylor (Oxford, 1694), p. 75; Bayle, *Dictionary*, i. 92 n, 220 n, and iv. 209 n. The decaying prestige of the old-style erudition is emphasised by John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 56–7, and Feingold, in *History of the University of Oxford*, iv. 234–6, 239–41.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, ed. Jackson I. Cope and Harold Whitmore Jones (1959), pp. 23–4. Scaliger had told Cluverius sixty years earlier that, with the exception of geography, every kind of study had been exhausted or completed; Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, ii. 390 n. Cf. Baker, *Reflections upon Learning*, p. 194 (‘the business is pretty well done’). William Wotton, friend of Richard Bentley, was nearer the mark when he wrote of textual criticism that ‘the subject is, in a manner, exhausted; or, at least, so far drain’d, that it requires more labour, and a greater force of genius, now to gather good gleanings, than formerly to bring home a plentiful harvest’; *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, p. 319.

the *philosophes* would dismiss erudition as the most primitive phase in the progress of knowledge.¹⁴⁸

The wits and taste-makers of Augustan England thought that austere learning was boring. Preferring taste and creativity to erudition, they ranked *belles-lettres* above scholarship.¹⁴⁹ Jonathan Swift dismissed antiquarians as ‘laborious men of low genius’, while Bolingbroke expressed ‘a thorough contempt for the whole business of these learned lives; for all the researches into antiquity, for all the systems of chronology and history that we owe to the[ir] immense labours’.¹⁵⁰ The bookseller to whom in 1716 Humphrey Prideaux offered the two volumes of his *The Old and New Testament Connected* said he ‘could wish there were a little more humour in it’.¹⁵¹

* * *

To leave the early eighteenth century for the twenty-first is to enter a very different scholarly world. Today, the learned do not depend on the Church for their patronage; and it is rare for lawyers or landowners to have scholarly interests. Learning has become a specialised, professional activity, carried out by women as well as men, and based in the universities, which seek to provide financial security and intellectual independence. The agenda of the learned is not supposed to be set by the political establishment, but determined by scholars themselves.

Most of the subjects which developed in the early modern period are still there: classics, oriental languages, history, and archaeology. But their purpose and direction have been transformed. Learning today is secular

¹⁴⁸ Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (1995), pp. 63–4, 91–2.

¹⁴⁹ On this transition, Viala, *Naissance de l’écrivain*, pp. 281–90. Wotton defiantly claimed that textual criticism ‘required more fineness of thought, and happiness of invention, than, perhaps, twenty such volumes as those were upon which these very criticisms were made. . . . There is a peculiar quickness in discerning what is proper to the passage then to be corrected, in distinguishing all the particular circumstances necessary to be observed, and those, perhaps, very numerous; which raise a judicious critic very often as much above the author upon whom he tries his skill, as he that discerns another man’s thoughts is therein greater than he that thinks.’ *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, pp. 317–18.

¹⁵⁰ Jonathan Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712), ed. Herbert Davis and Louis Landa (Oxford, 1957), p. 18; *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (written 1736–8), in *The Works of . . . Henry St John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*, new edn. (1809), iii. 318.

¹⁵¹ *DNB*, s.n., ‘Prideaux, Humphrey’. The same story was told of his *Life of Mahomet*. Even if apocryphal, it indicates the direction in which things were going.

and, supposedly, objective and value-free.¹⁵² Modern bishops are seldom learned and the churches care little for Greek or Hebrew.¹⁵³ Politicians do not argue about medieval history; and certainly do not aspire to learning. Governments still summon the learned for advice, but it is to scientists, economists, lawyers or students of modern politics that they turn, not philologists or historians.¹⁵⁴ Scholars in the humanities are seldom intellectuals: their horizons are too narrow and their standards too high to allow them to comment freely on issues outside their own area of expertise.¹⁵⁵ There is no necessary link between academic learning and general cultivation, for serious scholars have little time for other branches of their subject, leave alone other pursuits. As Max Weber suggested, the scholar has ceased to be a sage and become a technician.¹⁵⁶

Modern writers and artists tend to regard the learned as essentially uncreative, parasitic upon the work of the more gifted; and a wide gulf yawns between literary scholarship and literary creation. Mark Van Doren, a teacher at Columbia University, once told the American poet, John Berryman, rather coarsely, that ‘scholarshit is for those with shovels, whereas you’re a man of the pen, the wing, the flying horse, the shining angel, the glittering fiend—anything but the manure whereunder scholars have buried the masterpieces of the world’.¹⁵⁷ ‘There are exceptions,’ said A. E. Housman, ‘but in general, if a man wants really penetrating judgments, really illuminating criticism on a classical author, he is ill advised if he goes to a classical scholar to get them.’¹⁵⁸

Among the public at large, learning lacks the allure of the fine arts or the utilitarian promise of the sciences, while being too demanding to be

¹⁵² Max Weber, ‘Science as a vocation’, in *From Max Weber. Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1948), chap. v.

¹⁵³ This is an old complaint: see *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford, 1934–50), ii. 352–3; v. 80. Cf. the comments of Bennett, *To the Church of England*, ed. Rowell, pp. 129–30, 146, 201. The appointment as archbishop of Canterbury of Dr Rowan Williams, FBA, had not been made when this lecture was delivered.

¹⁵⁴ Though I was once asked by the Shropshire police to help them with their inquiries into a murder case, where ‘witchcraft’ was suspected.

¹⁵⁵ As is noted by Frank Furedi, ‘An Intellectual Vacuum’, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 5 Oct. 2001.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Science as a Vocation’, esp. pp. 152–3; discussed by Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge. French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective 1890–1920* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 307–8.

¹⁵⁷ *The Selected Letters of Mark Van Doren*, ed. George Hendrick (1987), p. 267. For a modern historian’s wistful reflections on the tendency of scholarly work to smother artistic creativity, see E. L. Woodward, *Short Journey* (1942), p. 157.

¹⁵⁸ A. E. Housman, *Introductory Lecture delivered before the Faculties of Arts and Laws and of Science in University College London, Oct. 3 1892* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 28.

easily understood in its own terms. Typically, modern scholars write for a sub-section of their own disciplinary community. If they venture into the commercial market-place or onto the television screen, they are accused (and usually with justification) of having lowered their intellectual standards. Each week, book reviews in the media afford instances of what has been called 'that peculiar form of jealous antipathy with which an inaccurate writer on scholarly subjects will sometimes regard scholars'.¹⁵⁹ Academics retaliate by denouncing 'popularisers' and 'journalists'. They fortify the frontier which separates them from the populace by mining it with arcane jargon and fencing it with esoteric 'theory'. As a result, the content of modern humane learning is almost totally unknown to politicians, civil servants, and journalists. They do not hang pictures of scholars in their offices or flock to their funerals.¹⁶⁰

The learned are no longer regarded as custodians of virtue, authorities on how to live, for we are all relativists now and there is no agreement as to what virtue is. In any case, the vanity and self-obsession which led some early-modern observers to deny the claim of scholars to moral superiority¹⁶¹ has perhaps not altogether disappeared.¹⁶²

The reason that the role of scholars in modern Britain is so different from what it was in early modern times is that the nature and purpose of humane learning have radically changed. Today, we go to the past, not for its wisdom or its exemplary lessons, or to buttress a political programme, but because we value the empathetic understanding of alien cultures or forgotten modes of thought and expression. Although the past can sometimes appear disconcertingly similar to the present, its essential appeal lies in its dissimilarity and 'otherness'. The insights we gain from studying it are crucial for our self-knowledge and our understanding of others

¹⁵⁹ R. C. Jebb, *Bentley* (1882; 1909 edn.), p. 202. 'Given that it started life as an academic study . . . this is a readable book', writes Anne McHardy, in a review in *Observer Books*, 29 July 2001. There are some lively remarks on this theme in Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (Princeton and Oxford, 2001), pp. 21, 33, 111–12.

¹⁶⁰ After this lecture was delivered, Mr John Flemming informed me that a portrait of John Locke used to hang in the office of the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury.

¹⁶¹ The great deflators of learned pretensions in this sphere were Michel de Montaigne and his disciple Pierre Charron. See, e.g., *The Essays of Montaigne done into English by John Florio* (1603), ed. George Saintsbury (1893), i. 134–47; ii. 395; iii. 299; Charron, *Of Wisdom*, ii (2nd pagination), pp. 237–43; and similar passages quoted by James J. Supple, *Arms versus Letters. The Military and Literary Ideals in the 'Essais' of Montaigne* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 284–6.

¹⁶² The late Sir Geoffrey Elton wrote of the 'academic atmosphere': 'it is neither peaceful nor mollifying. It is pungent. It smells. It smells of sulphur and cordite. It's a battle line. The hospitals are full of the casualties.' G. R. Elton, *The Future of the Past. An Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 30.

and of the world. But they are a much harder cause for which to enlist public support than the older idea of scholarship as a resource capable of direct application to current problems. That is why the purpose of the life of learning is so dimly understood and why funding for research in the humanities remains a perpetual problem.

So how can we defend ourselves against the charge that the study of the humanities no longer has any coherent rationale?¹⁶³ That it lacks any immediate utility or larger moral purpose; and that the main object of academic publication is merely the advancement of its authors and their institutions?

One way is to claim that scholarship offers an austere, but intensely satisfying, form of personal fulfilment. In Mark Pattison's words, 'Learning is a peculiar compound of memory, imagination, scientific habit, accurate observation, all concentrated, through a prolonged period, on the analysis of the remains of literature. The result of this sustained mental endeavour is not a book, but a man.'¹⁶⁴ Another answer was given by Housman, who welcomed scholarship as a superior form of self-indulgence. 'If a certain department of knowledge specially attracts a man', he declared, 'let him study that, and study it because it attracts him; and let him not fabricate excuses. . . . The desire of knowledge does not need, nor could it possibly possess, any higher or more authentic sanction than the happiness which attends its gratification.' Less intense than the pleasures of sense or of the affections, the pleasures of the intellect were the most enduring.¹⁶⁵ This hedonistic view of the life of learning has its modern defenders,¹⁶⁶ but it would have greatly shocked our early modern predecessors, who believed that scholarship should always benefit others; and, like Pattison's case for learning as a form of personal self-improvement, it offers no strong reason why scholarship should be publicly supported.

Instead, I suggest that we should return to the early modern view that learning should be cherished because it makes an essential contribution

¹⁶³ Made, for example, by George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York and Oxford, 1997), p. 108.

¹⁶⁴ Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon*, p. 435.

¹⁶⁵ Housman, *Introductory Lecture*, pp. 40, 33, 38–9, perhaps unconsciously echoing Thomas Hobbes's remark that 'lust of the mind . . . exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnal pleasure'; *Leviathan* (1651), ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), p. 42 (I. vi).

¹⁶⁶ e.g., H. L. Wesseling, 'The Pleasures of the Past and the Joy of History', *European Review*, 7 (1999); and Henry Mayr-Harting, 'History's Claims', *Times Educational Supplement*, 14 June 1985: 'My view is that the *only* good reason for the study of history is its intrinsic interest, or . . . sheer pleasure.'

to contemporary needs. Not in the same way as it did in the past, of course, though modern scholarship does have covert political or religious objectives more frequently than is always admitted. But because no assessment of human limits and potentialities can be informed if it does not take account of previous experience. By studying books, manuscripts, and works of art, digging up sites and writing commentaries and histories, scholars resist the annihilation of what has gone before. Without their work, the past would survive only in the most selective and mythical form. By reminding us that there are other ways of living and thinking, the learned contribute a crucial element to our self-awareness. Even the philosopher, Descartes, who was notorious for rejecting history, and valuing reason rather than erudition, conceded that it is useful to learn from the past that not everything contrary to modern custom is necessarily ridiculous or irrational.¹⁶⁷ Nowadays, when the different cultures of the world live in so much greater proximity to each other, the need for scholars to dispel mutual incomprehension has never been greater.¹⁶⁸

Finally, the life of learning still has an exemplary morality to offer. Where else, save in other forms of academic inquiry, can we find the same scrupulous concern for truth, the same requirement that all propositions which are not self-evidently true should be documented, the same conviction that getting things right is more important than a quick fix, the same acceptance of the complexity of things and the same refusal to contemplate any dumbing down? And where else is hard-won knowledge freely imparted, without hope of financial recompense? So long as these qualities remain in evidence, those who follow the life of learning have no reason to be ashamed of their calling.

¹⁶⁷ 'Discours de la Méthode', pt. 1, in *Oeuvres et Lettres*, ed. André Bridoux, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, 1953), p. 129.

¹⁶⁸ 'During World War Two, the intellectual challenge went out to physicists and chemists, mathematicians and engineers to solve technical problems of enormous complexity. If there really is to be something like a war on terrorism, then the new challenge seems to be addressed to anthropologists and historians, sociologists and theologians, students of the symbolic rather than the technical'; Lorraine Daston in *The London Review of Books*, 4 Oct. 2001, p. 21.