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Cover illustration: A spoof of the “Devil’s Chaplain”, the Rev. Robert Taylor (left, on the podium). His patron, the atheist Richard Carlile, is seen on the right, landing a punch. The wine merchant W. D. Saull funded both men and grounded his evolutionary talks in their dissident sciences. Such pastiches reinforced the prejudices of pious readers, by depicting the moral rot caused by irreligion. The wall posters on the left advertize contraception manuals and licentious memoirs, and a lecture by “Miss Sharples”, Carlile’s common-law “wife”. Taylor’s character is being impugned by portraying the mayhem caused by his infidel oratory. Beyond the brawling and debauchery, thieves are shown in the audience (bottom right) and a dagger-wielding agitator (centre). In reality, Taylor’s congregations were respectable and attentive.

Etching, in the author’s possession, entitled “The Triumph of Free Discussion” (the motto of Carlile’s Fleet Street shop selling subversive prints). The caption reads, “A Sketch taken in the Westminster Cock Pit on Wednesday the 24th. of September 1834. Subject A Lecture by the Revd R. Taylor, A.B.M.R.C.S. ‘On the importance of Character’.”

Cover design by Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

15. Martyrs, Churches, and Vestries

By far Saull's most famous redemptive campaign was for the repatriation of the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs'. This was extraordinarily emotive episode. The farm labourers in the tiny Dorset village had been transported for resisting a shilling wage-cut and swearing a union oath. As their case became a *cause célèbre*, Saull achieved his highest public profile as an organizer. He acted as one of the lieutenants to the firebrand Thomas Wakley, as well as Treasurer of the Dorchester Committee from 1835. If you wanted to buy tickets for the benefit concert at the Royal Victoria Theatre (a new drama with the actors giving their services free, all in support of the wives and children), you contacted Saull. If you wanted to attend the Dorchester Committee's public dinners at White Conduit House, Thomas Wakley presiding (with Saull sitting in when Wakley left), you paid your 3s to him, or 1s for just the Ball afterwards. It was a huge undertaking, juggling a torrent of little sums, the £5 made up from Spitalfields weavers' pennies, the umpteen receipts, disbursements, audited balances, in short hundreds of accumulated pounds to fund the repatriation campaign or keep the martyrs' fatherless families afloat.¹

Wakley, a medical journalist who founded the campaigning *Lancet*, was the newly-elected doctrinaire radical MP for the enormous new Finsbury constituency (created as a result of the Reform Bill), with its third of a million inhabitants. He was voted in by the shopkeepers, whose trade was among the working classes, so he represented, in effect, the poorer communities in Parliament. Conservatives derided

1 *TS*, 16 Sept. 1836, 5; 25 Apr. 1837, 2; 30 Apr. 1837, 1. *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer*, 24 Sept. 1836; 13 Nov. 1836; 30 Apr. 1837. *Spitalfields Weavers' Journal* 1 (3 Oct. 1837): 24. For another theatrical benefit, at the Royal Pavilion Theatre, see *London Mercury*, 4 Dec. 1836, 8.

him with racist sneers as “the *honourable* (!) member who represents the Jew clothes-venders of Finsbury”.² Wakley passionately pleaded the convicts’ case in the House, while Saull organized union support and fundraising for the families,³ and all this as he was rebuilding and re-launching his museum.

Wakley’s emotive speeches on the exiles’ plight reduced the House of Commons to tears: “The great paunch-bellied, whiskered fellows were to be seen sobbing in all directions”.⁴ Saull, for a moment, could be just as rousing. The transportation had exposed the threat tactic, as Saull (not above issuing threats himself) told trades’ unionists: the magistracy had

a deeper scheme—it had wished to intimidate the many by the example made of the few. The rising spirit of liberty was to be crushed by the blow—(Never, never.) And let it not be disguised unless the people roused themselves and imitated their brethren in France, some dreadful attack must be anticipated.⁵

Ultimately Wakley’s affecting oratory, backed by radical clamour, got the prisoners their pardons—and in 1837 their repatriation as well at Her Majesty’s expense.⁶ So that left the public procession through London to organize,⁷ as well as the *dénouement*: buying the men small farms with the £600 surplus, which would protect them from further harassment by the magistrates.⁸ The reforming *Morning Chronicle* gave an upbeat account of the day-long procession on 3 April 1838 to celebrate this success—the “dense” cheering crowds, twenty-four thousand it reckoned, the six thousand trades people with their “splendid banners”

2 *London Medical Gazette* 15 (17 Jan. 1835): 562; Desmond 1989, 156.

3 *NMW* 1 (14 Mar. 1835): 160; 21 Mar. 1835, 168; *PMG*, 4 Apr. 1835; *TS*, 22 Apr. 1835, 2; 4 May 1835, 1; 12 May 1835, 1; 20 May 1835, 4; 16 June 1835, 1; 8 July 1835, 2, 6.

4 *NS*, 21 Apr. 1838.

5 *TS*, 22 Apr. 1835, 2.

6 *London Mercury*, 16 July 1837, 6.

7 *TS*, 15 July 1837, 8.

8 *CPG*, 31 Mar. 1838, 2; *NS*, 31 Mar. 1838; *Charter*, 14 Apr. 1839, 184; 13 Oct. 1839, 606. On the Crown and Anchor meeting (chaired by Saull) and subsequent meetings, to discuss buying farms, which they did in Chipping Ongar, Essex, and Harlow: *London Dispatch and People’s Political and Social Reformer*, 13 May 1838; 26 Aug. 1838, 6; 1 Sept. 1839; *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 13 May 1838; *Champion*, 14 May 1838, 11–13; *NS*, 9 June 1838; *CPG*, 8 Sept. 1838. The committee was wound up in 1842: *National Association Gazette*, 30 Apr. 1842, 140.

snaking one after the other out of Kennington Common on their way to Oxford Street and beyond, the bands striking up "See the conquering hero comes" as they passed the Home Office, just to rub it in. The five Dorchester men sat royally in an open landau carriage drawn by four horses. The *Chronicle* noted the good humour and best behaviour, with the readied Bow Street officers being told to stand down in consequence. The event ended with a gala dinner in a thousand-seater tent, where Saull sat in till Wakley, the chairman, arrived.⁹

Saull's stock was rising but only among radicals. Contrast that sympathetic view with the derision of the *Morning Post*, which belittled the procession for its conservative readers. It is a fascinating counter-account, and we only learn of Saull's real standing from its attempt to stoke up hostility. The day was miserable, pelting with rain, and what few banners there were ended up in tatters. The "mob", only two or three thousand at the start, had "poured forth from courts, alleys, and 'back-slums'". "A more ruffianly set" could not be imagined. The snide asides piled up, feeding the prejudice: "Nearly a third of them were dressed in flannel jackets, like those worn by bricklayers' men, and a vast number had traces of their Sunday frays, in blackened eyes and swollen faces." Hints of drunken sprawls were to litter the report to the end. Expectation was met with deflation: "There were none of the 'Liberty or Death' banners" of former parades, as if that would at least have roused the passions of its Tory readers. The "rabble-rout" seemed "very apathetic about the matter". "Indeed a large proportion of the crowd showed by their remarks that they regarded the whole foolery as most ridiculous." The sneering then fell on Saull:

The order of march was first, a few men, mounted on dray horses, to clear the way; then the trades in their order, next the "Dorchester Committee," followed by the landau and its contents, and closed by a miscellaneous rabble. We had almost forgotten an important personage who figured in the printed programme as "the Treasurer of the Committee," and who was to follow immediately after the landau "in his carriage." We looked long and anxiously for the "carriage," and at last discovered a "one horse chaise," in which were seated the "treasurer" aforesaid, who is named Saull ... !

9 MC, 17 Apr. 1838; *Patriot*, 19 Apr. 1838, 250.

Frugality and modesty obviously cut no ice, but it shows how important the object of derision was—riding directly behind the Dorset men in his little chaise. By the time the procession reached the banquet tent at White Conduit House, the sodden “labourers” were covered in mud and “a great many of the men were much intoxicated.” The sour note continued with the feast, and “whether the gin or the air had whetted their appetites”, the ravenous hordes rushed at the food: “tables were overturned, women screamed, and men swore, and blows were exchanged with frightful rapidity”, confirming a genteel audience’s view of the visceral proclivities of the sons of toil. Here a host of “mobocrats” made the usual “blasphemous exhibition” in their speeches, while the overwhelmed Dorchester “labourers” showed themselves to be “men wholly illiterate”. Then came the parody of dropped ‘h’s, when one speaker was reported as saying that “sooner than [being] torn from his home by them there miscreants he would have suffered a dagger to be plunged in this here art”.

But it was again the *Post*’s view of Saull’s speechifying that is revealing: it was “of that kind of oratory ‘which the learned call rigmarole.’” To a Tory, his words to the “congregated rabble”, pleading for more funds (to buy farms) and calls for a show of hands of those who had no vote—“when instantly a whole forest of paws was exhibited”—was incoherent. In fact, given a radical’s tacit knowledge, the speech made perfect sense: Saull said that democracy would have prevented the Tolpuddle abuse in the first place. The *Post* depicted the “ladies” (a common slur using quote marks) attending the ball afterwards, and the effects of further “raw gin” into the night were left to the imagination of its readers.¹⁰ It was a clever exercise to reinforce just about every genteel prejudice. But

10 *Morning Post*, 17 Apr. 1838; for more denigration, see *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, 19 Apr. 1838. Political slants dominated such reports, so by contrast the *Globe* applauded the “good order, decorum, and respectability” of the crowd, as reported by *NS*, 21 Apr. 1838. This was the general view: *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 22 Apr. 1838. Experience had taught them to expect the slanders, and the people “seemed resolved that no act of theirs during the day should afford a pretext for abuse or ribaldry to their enemies”: *Champion and Weekly Herald*, 23 Apr. 1838. This source estimated the numbers at 80–100,000. The supposedly illiterate George Loveless, the most senior of the convicts, was an affable lay preacher. His 4d pamphlet, *The Victims of Whiggery* (1838)—published from Cleave’s, Hetherington’s and Watson’s premises—had gone through eight editions and sold 12,000 copies by January 1838.

from this negative we can extract the positive—we can see how central Saull was inside the organization.

The Dorchester Committee might have seen Saull in highest profile, but it was not an isolated instance. He seemed to be a treasurer here, there, and everywhere. For example, he had barely begun to contemplate buying farms for the families, when he was chairing meetings and acting treasurer to the defence committee of another victim, the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens.¹¹ A Methodist preacher (although separated from the Connection because he advocated the disestablishment of the Church), Stephens had swayed men across Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands with his stirring sermons. He preached from open carts in town squares on the “misery” of factory workers and the iniquity of child labour. As for the Poor Law workhouse, it was “so abhorrent” that Stephens told his listeners to tar and feather the guardians and send them back to London. The mill owners were already sacking Stephens’s supporters, now the Bow Street runners finished the job. In 1838, he was charged in Manchester with using “violent and inflammatory language” to incite the crowd of “evil-disposed and disorderly persons”. Witnesses said he was naming the poor-law guardians and mill owners, and quoting Scripture—“Vengeance is mine”—while telling onlookers to “get their guns and pikes”. (Apparently the sales of pikes did rise after each Stephens speech.)¹² Despite a campaign in Manchester, and a Saull-led defence fund in London, the authorities cracked down harshly. Even the bails and sureties before the trial ran to £4600, and, at Chester Assizes in August 1839, the Rev. Stephens was given an eighteen-month sentence.¹³

It is a wonder Saull found time to run his business and promote his science while juggling so many political balls. When not geology lecturing, visiting Paris with Owen, attacking the poor laws, campaigning, working to get George de Lacy Evans (the General just returned from leading the British Legion volunteers against the Carlist insurrection in Spain) re-elected radical MP for Westminster,¹⁴ or

11 *The Operative*, 14 Apr. 1839; 21 Apr. 1839; *Champion and Weekly Herald*, 14 Apr. 1839, 5; 28 Apr. 1839, 4; *CGV*, 27 Apr. 1839, 2; *Charter*, 21 Apr. 1839, 200.

12 *MC*, 31 Dec. 1838; Holyoake 1881, 16, 27–28, 47–56.

13 *Times*, 4 May 1839, 6; *NS*, 11 May 1839; Holyoake 1881, 146, 172–74.

14 *MC*, 28 June 1837; *TS*, 28 June 1837, 6.

decrying the milk-and-water reforms which left the mass of the people untouched (at the Metropolitan Parliamentary Reform Association),¹⁵ he was devoting his energies to corporation reform. On this Saull was indefatigable: he surfaced more in the daily press campaigning for City democracy in the thirties and forties than on any other issue. As an Aldersgate street ward elector of “common councilmen” of the City of London, and an officer—an auditor of the council’s books—he had long been at the heart of affairs.¹⁶ He was on the Committee to aid the Corporate Reform commissioners. No Guildhall meeting passed with the Livery of London pressuring the Whigs on reform without Saull’s Committee work.¹⁷ Nor was he less forceful in fighting the ‘tyrannical power of Court of Aldermen’ for refusing to admit an “Infidel”—Michael Scales of Portsoken Ward—who had twice been elected but kept out.¹⁸

Saull was, perhaps rather incongruously, a member of that droll body of extreme liberals, the “Ancient and Honourable Lumber Troop”, by all accounts an uproarious dining club which met in Dr Johnson’s House and once included Hogarth as a Trooper.¹⁹ And, on one occasion, Saull had the old chaps see off a prospective Tory MP who stumbled into their group trying to canvas support to represent the City.²⁰ In this instance, the Tory was trounced at the polls by the East India merchant and reformer William Crawford, who did have Saull’s backing. The City returned four MPs and the four candidates Saull supported were all reformers—and, given the long leftward drift of the City, they were all elected. Not, of course, that they were not grilled in advance on key issues. One of the founders of the new London University, George Grote, then struggling to write his *History of Greece*, was keen to see the ballot, triennial parliaments, and Church reform brought in, and the taxes on

15 *Daily News*, 28 Apr. 1849.

16 *Courier*, 26 June 1832, 3; *Atlas*, 1 July 1832, 421; *Times*, 26 June 1832, 3; *MC*, 26 June 1832; 25 June 1834; 25 June 1834; *Standard*, 25 June 1834, 1; *Royal Kalendar*, 1836, 297; 1838, 297; *TS*, 26 June 1834, 6; 28 June 1834, 3.

17 *Times*, 20 Sept. 1831, 3; 30 Sept. 1831, 3; *MC*, 28 Sept. 1833, 1.

18 Carlile claimed that Scales had been barred because he was an “Infidel”: *Prompter* 1 (21 May 1831): 462. *Morning Post*, 22 Dec. 1832; *TS*, 6 July 1833; *MC*, 21 Sept. 1833.

19 James Grant 1838, 89.

20 The candidate was Francis Kemble (Beaven 1908, 1: 283, 294), who was obviously unaware that he was stepping into the lion’s den: *TS*, 8 Aug. 1833, 2; 9 Aug. 1833, 2. There was a sort of freemasonry to the Troop, so I suspect that Saull was using it for business purposes.

knowledge and tithes thrown out. But Saull still pressured him on the iniquity of Dissenters being forced to pay church rates before finally giving his endorsement.²¹

As an anti-clerical Owenite and tormentor of his local vicar, Saull had long railed against church rates, levied for the upkeep of local Anglican churches. London, awash with “washed & unwashed Radicals”, might have been godless in the eyes of Oxford and Cambridge clerics, but spires still dominated its skyline. It had an astonishing 400 churches and chapels.²² Saull could waft away his local vicar’s attempt at conversion with astro-geological confidence, but behind his contempt for a state-paid priesthood was real ire. Like all blasphemy-radicals, he fulminated against the “fat livings” of many a London incumbent, these “plundering oppressors” of the working poor.²³ Rectories could be in a bishop’s or aristocrat’s gift. Ones such as St Botolph’s in Bishopsgate were pulling in £2500 a year. Cripplegate’s vicar received £2,300 in tithes, church rates, and so on, and he was not even resident.²⁴

The disparity between clerical wealth and parishioner poverty explains the rise of subversive rags like Cleave’s *Slap at the Church* (1832) with its visceral laceration of that “destructive species of black slug called PARSONS”.²⁵ This paper was so in-your-face that even when it morphed into the more sheepishly-clothed *Church Examiner* (1832) it was still prosecuted.²⁶ While the penny blasphemies remained the most colourfully vulgar, opposition to tithes and church rates spread through the whole Dissenting community, and since Dissenters by 1833 for the first time outnumbered Anglicans in the country, resistance

21 *British Traveller And Commercial And Law Gazette*, 24 Nov. 1832, 1. For Saull’s endorsements: *TS*, 31 Dec. 1834, 2; *MC*, 31 Dec. 1834. In 1846 Saull was one of the merchants on the City’s “Liberal Registration Association”, which was designed to update the electoral register to maximise enfranchisement: *Daily News*, 23 Dec. 1846, 1.

22 *Cosmopolite*, 29 Sept. 1832, in HO 64/18 f. 652; “washed” quoted by J. A. Secord 2000, 267.

23 Hetherington 1830; [1832], 14; Saull 1828a.

24 *Cosmopolite*, 22 Sept. 1832, in HO 64/18, f. 667; *The Church Examiner and Ecclesiastical Record*, 1 Sept. 1832.

25 *A Slap at the Church*, 12 May 1832, in HO 64/11, f. 418. Saull pointed out that “The archbishop of Paris received £860 per annum, the archbishop of Canterbury, £25000!” And the French clergy made a greater effort to promote the “welfare of their flocks” so that “the lowest paid was best served”, which was designed to appeal in an age of ‘cheap government’: Saull 1837.

26 *Church Examiner and Ecclesiastical Record*, 15 Sept. 1832, in HO 64/18, f. 384.

was actually widespread. Saull told his vestry meeting that there was a “gross injustice of imposing such a tax upon dissenters”, and that he “would never, so long as he could raise his voice or his hand against it, consent to a church-rate [loud applause]”. He helped to block it in his Aldersgate parish, where it was made a voluntary contribution rather than compulsory levy.²⁷

Saull is rarely reported speaking on anything but radical politics at his vestry meetings.²⁸ Aldersgate ward politics were just as lively. Each year at the September elections of Common Councilmen, Saull would ask tricky question or propose reformist resolutions, almost all of which were carried. Thus in 1834 and 1837 he insisted on knowing the candidates’ political views, which had previously not been considered important.²⁹ In 1836, he questioned the exorbitance of City spending on the King’s domestic servants and wanted to know how prospective councilmen stood on the £500 set aside to build churches, which were irrelevant to City trade.³⁰ He did not operate alone. The Aldersgate ward radicals ran in tandem. So Saull would propose a council candidate (in 1834 and again 1837, T. Alcock, sometime spelled Allcock), who “was a sincere reformer, a friend to triennial Parliaments, household suffrage, and vote by ballot.”³¹ And Alcock would then successfully second Saull’s resolution to ban the “abominable” anti-Catholic oath, which had to be pledged by prospective Common Councilmen. (This holdover from the years before Catholic emancipation, which was still barring Catholics from council offices, sat uneasily with the reformists’ demands for religious toleration.³²) And both men took part in the “spirited” denunciations on the new Police Bill in 1839, which radicals saw designed more to suppress discontent than prevent crime. It increased

27 MC, 15 June 1840.

28 The only exception I can find referred to a vestry meeting where he complained that the new river company was not supplying enough water to Aldersgate: TS, 19 Sept. 1835, 3.

29 MC, 23 Dec. 1834; 27 Sept. 1837; 29 Sept. 1837; TS, 23 Dec. 1834, 8; *Times*, 29 Sept. 1837, 3.

30 *Patriot*, 22 Dec. 1836, 565; *Baldwin’s London Weekly Journal*, 24 Dec. 1836, 4.

31 MC, 23 Dec. 1834; TS, 23 Dec. 1834, 8. On Saull and Alcock see also TS, 22 Dec. 1835, 8; MC, 27 Sept. 1837; 29 Sept. 1837; *Times*, 29 Sept. 1837, 3.

32 TS, 26 Dec. 1835, 4.

the number of offences and police powers, and allowed constables to close establishments on the Sabbath.³³

Even inside the broader coalition making up the “City of London Corporation Reform Association”—designed to make the City more fiscally prudent by rooting out the vestiges of corruption—the radicals, including Alcock and Saull, pushed to increase the ballot at both the City and local levels.³⁴ The City’s diluted response to corporation reform led to more radical petitioning, and attacks on representatives whose corporation power displayed itself in “ostentation, jobbing, and gluttony”. Saull, the abstemious Owenite, actually resigned as a City auditor in the mid-thirties, because he was “so ashamed of the large sums of money which were voted away for eating and drinking”.³⁵

Others in the City could be counted on. Perhaps the most interesting was fellow municipal reformer Henry Bradshaw Fearon, who mixed religious and political radicalism. Fearon was a Freethinking Christian. This tiny sect denied Christ’s divinity and the doctrine of the Fall, and Fearon swallowed Volney and Holbach like the rest. And even though Saull’s materialists never understood the sect’s faith in Scripture, it did not stop their joint activism.³⁶ Like Saull and Alcott in Aldersgate, Fearon was a reformer in Farringdon ward. All of these men backed one another at Guildhall meetings, for example in agitating for the Lords to pass the Corporation Reform Bill.³⁷ Fearon was also in the liquor trade, a brewer and owner of Thompson and Fearon’s gin palace on Holborn Hill, where a tot could be gulped on the trot (there were no tables or chairs in the main bar). A noggin of “Fearon’s best” was “served by young women dressed up like the BELLE LIMONADIERE of a Paris Coffee-house, and the establishment in all its parts is nearly as fine as VEREY’s or the CAFE DE PARIS”.³⁸ This was supposedly the largest gin-shop in England, possibly the world, with its profits again funding the movement—and,

33 *Times*, 18 Mar. 1839, 5; Goodway 1982, 103–05.

34 *MC*, 19 Jan. 1839. See also *Courier*, 9 Nov. 1838, 4; *MC*, 16 Nov. 1838; 23 Nov. 1838; 12 Jan. 1839; 21 Feb. 1839; 18 Apr. 1840; *Patriot*, 26 Nov. 1838, 766; *Times*, 1 Dec. 1838, 6.

35 *MC*, 4 Apr. 1839; 20 Mar. 1840.

36 *GM* 143 (1828): 507–12. Henry Hetherington and Saull’s solicitor William Henry Ashurst were also members of the sect. McCalman 1988, ch. 4, for the sect’s history.

37 *TS*, 30 Sept. 1835, 2; also 13 Aug. 1835, 8; 28 Aug. 28 1835, 2.

38 *The Man*, 8 Dec. 1833, 176; Grant 1838, 223; J. White 2007, 283.

like Saull's depot, it *was* profitable. As a Freethinking Christian, Fearon shows an alternative scientific direction that radicalism could take. He used Lawrence's *Lectures on Man* to make life and mind depend on bodily organization. Thus, body *and* mind were material, and with Fearon using Scripture to make body and soul one, the soul was itself so much matter, and mortal. In fact, every "beast of the earth" was a living soul.³⁹ The soul goes the way of all flesh, and it is only by a later resurrection of the dead that eternal life will begin. Thus Fearon, the mental materialist, ran with the anti-clerical radicals. In fact, they were all part of the same "mares'-nest" to a bemused *Fraser's Magazine*, which was reduced to ribaldry. Since Fearon, "this infidel high priest of a Spirit Temple", had made his money in spirits and was looking to retire, he was obviously suffering "remorse for the souls and bodies he has been thereby the instrument of ruining", and therefore was inclined "to disbelieve the existence of either".⁴⁰ More orthodox medical journalists just sighed that mental materialism "can scarcely make a single convert in an age so enlightened as the present". But it got a better hearing in London's back-street medical schools,⁴¹ and Fearon became a powerful ally in ward politics.

So radical were many City electors that one purveyor of "devilish poison", James Harmer, a Spitalfields-weaver's son turned solicitor and then Alderman or chief officer of Farringdon ward—the man who presented Saull's petition against his blasphemy charge to the Court of Common Council in 1828—narrowly failed to become Mayor in 1835.⁴² His failure reflected less his role as the "Thieves' Attorney-General": he was what would later be called a civil rights lawyer, specializing in wrong committals. It was more the content of Harmer's huge-selling *Weekly Dispatch* which drew the ire of the rival *Times* and the Tory aristocracy's favourite *The Age*, that mainstay of the gentlemen's clubs. What radicals saw as the *Dispatch's* dare-devil attacks on religious and political abuses, they saw as "blasphemy, disloyalty, and immorality", and not without justification. The *Dispatch's* "foetid and ... loathsome"

39 Fearon 1833, 53.

40 *Fraser's Magazine* 9 (Apr. 1834): 424–34.

41 Desmond 1989, ch. 4; *London Medical and Surgical Journal* ns 4 (25 Jan. 1834): 819–23.

42 *TS*, 30 Sept. 1835, 1. He ran again in 1840.

letters penned by “Publicola” (John Williams, the turncoat scion of a Tory family who skewered princes and priests in his coruscating epistles) showed him to be “the greatest single foe of the Church in the country”.⁴³ One onlooker fingered the *Dispatch* as the only paper (above-ground, that is) “which openly advocated Atheism”.⁴⁴ It helped to make what Shepherd Smith slated as the “blackguard paper”⁴⁵ into the best-selling weekly in the country. It was shifting 60,000 copies every Sunday in 1840. The *Dispatch*’s announcement that “There is no more moral depravity in being an infidel than in being a clergyman” left *The Age* incandescent. In the pubs, by contrast, Publicola’s letters were voraciously devoured: huge numbers of *Dispatches* ended up in the gin joints and coffee houses, despite being an expensive paper (8½d before the repeal of the newspaper tax in 1836, 6d afterwards). *The Age* could claim that the “beer-shop thieves’ dens are filled with ruffians, whose principal incitement to crime is in the columns” of Alderman Harmer’s paper. The *Times* and *Age* hammered away at the *Dispatch*’s insults to the sovereign, religion and what Publicola called “that bloody and beastly book” (the Bible). It was enough to frighten the electors into placing the mayoralty into safer hands. But only just.⁴⁶

43 Maccoby 1935, 420.

44 Grant 1871–72, 3: 42. And at least one respectable Mechanics’ Institute, Gloucester’s, cancelled its subscription accordingly: C. Turner 1980, 264.

45 W. A. Smith 1892, 210.

46 *The Age*, 27 Sept. 1840, 308, 309; Bourne 1887, 2: 101–02; Maccoby 1935, 416; J. Williams 1840.

