Reign of the Beast

The Atheist World of W. D. Saull and his Museum of Evolution

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https://www.openbookpublishers.com

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80511-239-6
ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80511-240-2
ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80511-241-9
ISBN Digital eBook (EPUB): 978-1-80511-242-6
ISBN HTML: 978-1-80511-244-0
DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0393

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

21. Secularism and Salvage

With Harmony's collapse went any hope for Saull's museum bequest. Yet, Saull remained faithful to Owen, even though others would have nothing more to do with him after the liquidation fiasco.[1] Owen remained a stabilizing force, even as the atheist tearaways were prising the movement apart, and as Harmony, the missions, and the Halls of Science were collapsing. Saull's rump Owenites salvaged what they could. They tried to develop something more low-key and practicable, a National Land and Building Association (founded 1845). This was to use subscriptions to purchase freehold land, with the intention of building comfortable and healthy workers' houses in model villages.[2]

A skeletal Owenite machine rumbled on. Year in, year out, come May, Saull would sit in the chair at John Street to celebrate Owen's birthday, singing the *Marseilles*, praising the 1848 revolutions. He would listen to old Owen (who turned eighty in 1851) rebut the young Turks' claims that he was just a visionary, by pleading that he was a "practical man". And, in truth, for all the failures, when it came to secular and infant education and so much else, that was true.[3] Holyoake was usually there, a rising star and a sign that however weakened Owenism was structurally, a splinter movement could carry the torch.

1 *Reasoner* 5 (31 May 1848): 2–3.

2 *Reasoner* 1 (18 Nov. 1846): 301–02); *NMW* 13 (19 July 1845): 454; West 1920, 223–24. The West-London Central Anti-Enclosure Association pooled their funds into it: *National Reformer*, 3 Oct. 1846, 3. They bought 100 acres thirty miles from London to make a start. But the idea of renting did not appeal to many activists, there being no democratic community control (Frost 1880, 68).

3 *UR*, 19 May 1847, 50; *NS*, 22 May 1847; 20 May 1848; 18 May 1850; and so on, each May, with Saull chairing the birthday celebrations, through to Owen's eighty-third birthday: *Reasoner* 14 (1 Jun. 1853): 346; "practical": *Reasoner* 11 (28 May 1851): 20; *NS*, 24 May 1851. J. F. C. Harrison 1967 on this lasting claim regarding infant education.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0393.21

Owen had tried to appease the Harmony-backing capitalists and defuse social hatreds by eschewing the old democratic radicalism and newer atheism. Only this, he believed, would allow his paternalist socialism to win through. The ruse backfired. Now Holyoake would give the lie to Owen's claim that anti-religious lectures were ruining the branches. Holyoake pointed out that atheist talks in Birmingham drew larger crowds than Owen's "sedate namby-pambyism" ever did.[4] Anyway, the freethinkers were now cut loose. A direct infidel link connected Carlile in the 1820s with Holyoake in the 1840s. It was Carlile's erstwhile shopman, the grave James Watson, now a leading infidel in his own right at the Mechanics' Hall of Science, who goaded Holyoake into getting the *Reasoner* off the ground. With trade slackening, partly from the Owenite collapse, Watson retrenched and moved his print shop to Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row. Pamphlets sat on shelves unsold, collecting dust, all for the want of an anti-Christian periodical to revive public appetite. He badgered Holyoake, who obligingly started the *Reasoner* on 3 June 1846,[5] and this long-lasting organ would carry the 'secularist' message of socialism into the post-1850s age of equipoise.

The *Reasoner*'s posthumous fame largely rested on its promotion of the neologism "secularism", used to describe the breakaway movement in 1851.[6] For many it seemed to simply swap the pejorative Christian 'infidelism' or negative 'atheism' for the neutral or positive 'secularism'. But these were not totally interchangeable terms: for example, a Muslim was also an 'infidel'—in Christian eyes—but not a secularist. Also, secularism could encompass people who were not atheists, those, for instance, opposed to the Church interfering in politics. The word 'scepticism' was no good: as Holyoake averred, "he was not sceptical—he was in no *doubt* about Christian error." 'Freethinking' did not remove the problem, because it also applied to certain Christian sects. Holyoake was to say that where freethought ends, secularism begins.[7] To him, it was not old wine in new bottles but a new vintage. It encompassed a morality resting on "material and social facts" rather than theology,

4 *Movement* 1 (13 Nov. 1844): 419; Royle 1974, 52–53.
5 Royle 1974, 92; Royle 1976, 61; Linton 1879, 83.
6 *Reasoner* 11 (9 July 1851): 118, for the word's early usage, but not by Holyoake; Rectenwald 2013.
7 Holyoake 1905, 1: 185; 2: 17; *Reasoner* 8 (20 Feb. 1850): 54.

making the secular itself "sacred". Embedded within his 'Secularism' was the precept of "ethical duty", or a code of conduct which owed nothing to revelation but allowed its adherents to detach the "truth of today" from the errors of yesterday.[8]

Even this was scarcely new but largely another iteration of the Holbachian ideal, and, as such, had been long advocated by radicals and socialists, including Saull. What *was* different—and warranted the re-branding—was the tone and tactics. Holyoake issued books in his "Cabinet of Reason" which were designed to fill the gap between "the dilettante Scepticism of gentlemen, and the undisciplined Rationalism of the poor".[9] It was this middling terrain occupied by "a hundred thousand sympathizers" that secularism was targeting. The word signalled a broadening: the movement spread its appeal to literary radicals already fleeing orthodox Christianity.[10] Holyoake was adapting Owen's outreach technique, encouraging not bourgeois capitalists to come over but bourgeois intellectuals. Detractors were not alone in seeing 'Secularism' provide a "respectable garb", which allowed Holyoake to manoeuvre among the intelligentsia undergoing their own 'crisis of faith'.[11] It was useful to a shrewd operator. But then Chilton had always recognized Holyoake as the "*pet*" of polite society.[12]

Secularism's slippery creed did not necessarily deny anything, and it equally offered little positive but the "Providence" of science and de-Christianized ethics. And because it emerged seamlessly out of socialist freethought, secularism remained overtly political, despite its indifference to the millennium (not a word to be found in the *Reasoner*). It continued the struggle for civil liberties, starting with a fight to get affirmations in place of Bible-based oaths, for so long a concern to Saull.[13] In short, it retained the political and moral message, the sort Saull had trumpeted in his lectures for a generation.

8 Holyoake 1892, 1: 254–55; 2: 292–93; Rectenwald 2013, 323–24; 2016, ch. 3; Marsh 1998, 124.

9 *Reasoner* 12 (19 Nov. 1851): 15; *Monthly Christian Spectator* 2 (Oct. 1852): 623; S. D. Collet 1855, 21.

10 Rectenwald 2013, 237–42; Royle 1974, 154; Ashton 2006, 8–9, 241; Nash 1995b, 124.

11 J. R. Moore 1990; Linton 1894, 163–64.

12 W. Chilton to G. J. Holyoake, 24 Dec. 1841, Holyoake Correspondence No. 22, Co-operative Union, Manchester.

13 Royle 1974, 4, 150–51.

The transition from the Harmony ethos, held by Owen and his wealthy backers, to Holyoake's Secularism with its broader appeal, was never abrupt. How smooth it was was shown by another financial backer who made the move. This was Owen's solicitor and fellow socialist, William Henry Ashurst. He was also Saull's solicitor, who dealt with his conveyancing of Rose Hill. Saull and Ashurst were long familiar: both attended Guildhall meetings on corporation reform, they jointly acted on deputations, both agitated against the church rates, and Ashurst actually refused to pay his. They stood on anti-corn-law platforms together,[14] and both were in the Metropolitan Parliamentary Reform Association in 1842.[15] This camaraderie would eventually be reflected in Ashurst's son representing his dying father at Saull's funeral.[16]

Political agreement on reform, suffrage, and Owenism overrode theological disparity. Saull was a more extreme anti-Christian. Ashurst was a lapsed Freethinking Christian, like his co-religionist Hetherington. But Ashurst's was a more gentle unbelief; he hated Hetherington's violent language. Ashurst's Muswell Hill home was an open radical salon. As the solicitor to the cause, he provided legal help in fighting the taxes on knowledge, and advising Holyoake during his 1842 blasphemy trial.[17] Being an Owenite, he was famous for exploring mitigating factors in court. By showing how circumstances might have helped induce a crime, he saved untold poor souls from transportation. Ashurst was one of the middle-class backers Owen was trying to keep onside during the Harmony years: Ashurst had actually devised the constitution of Owen's Home Colonization Society, which bankrolled the Harmony building.[18]

14 *TS*, 13 Aug. 1835, 8; 6 July 1836, 2; 22 Dec. 1836, 1; *MC*, 22 Dec. 1836, 1; *Atlas*, 20 Dec. 1845, 817; Ashurst *ODNB*.

15 Rowe 1870b, 71a, 129. Ashurst also helped Rowland Hill get his penny postage reform through in 1839. There had been a rash of petitions that year for a flat uniform postage rate, including one by Saull (*Journals of the House of Commons* 94 [12 July1839]: 437), although whether he was actuated by a desire to see newspaper and tract distribution streamlined, or working people able to afford mail, or even to benefit his business, which must have involved a huge mail accounting system, we do not know.

16 *Reasoner* 19 (13 May 1855): 55.

17 Holyoake 1892, 177, ch. 34; C. D. Collet 1933, 19, 84; J. F. C. Harrison 1969, 225; McCabe 1908, 1: 140.

18 Royle 1998, 79; 1974, 91; Holyoake 1906, 1: 191; 2: 600. Then Ashurst dealt with its winding up and even poured money into the collapsing *New Moral World* at the end.

In 1849, Ashurst bought the Owenite *Spirit of the Age* (run by Robert Buchanan), toned it down, stretched its appeal, and made it an organ of "unsectarian socialism", with Holyoake as editor.[19] It was this same humane, liberal attitude that lay behind the *Reasoner*. Ashurst funded the *Reasoner*, wrote for it, and helped shape its moderate stance and wider horizons. More than that, it seems that it was at Ashurst's suggestion that Holyoake adopted the word 'secularism' for this phoenix rising from the socialist ashes.[20]

For the mellowing merchant Saull, the slide across to the 'secularists' was just as easy. Holyoake had unbounded organizational flair and was an effective facilitator. By marshalling the rump of Carlilean-Owenites and focussing on state bias and Church privilege,[21] he allowed Saull and Ashurst to keep their Owenite credentials while aligning them with disadvantaged Dissenters on the one hand and literary young blades like G. H. Lewes on the other. Saull was as happy to support Holyoake's demand for tolerance and disestablishment as he had been to support Carlile's raspier calls a generation earlier. That Saull and Holyoake were close is obvious. For his part, Holyoake exploited Saull's pub-circuit connections, and, while on a lecture tour in 1847, Holyoake used nephew John Saull's "Admiral Rodney" pub in Long Buckby in Northamptonshire as a venue.[22] This nephew, on visiting London a few months later, turned up at Holyoake's new Utilitarian Society (founded 1846), and heard both Holyoake and uncle William Devonshire respond to talks on ancient mythology and the "Two-natured Christ of the Churches".[23] This latest Holyoake society was itself supported by Saull, who understood the new meaning of "Utilitarian". In politics, it had long meant rule for the people's benefit, but now religion, too, had to give account of itself. As Holyoake proclaimed: "We shall have sealed the work of intellectual reformation when we have written *cui bono* over the altar".[24]

19 Holyoake 1892, 1: ch. 34; Goss 1908, xxxvi, 67; McCabe 1908, 1: 146.
20 Royle 1974, 93, 154–55; McCabe 1908, 1: 160, 203.
21 Nash 1995b, 124.
22 *UR*, 3 Feb. 1847, 20; *Reasoner* 2 (17 Feb. 1847): 69–70; (3 Mar. 1847): 106–07.
23 *UR*, 6 Oct. 1847, 89.
24 *Reasoner*, 2 (2 Dec. 1846): 1; Royle 1974. 94–95.

Vestiges of Creation

Holyoake's Utilitarian Society met in the Mechanics' Hall of Science in City Road, so Saull was on familiar turf. He was a regular attendee. From the first lecture (April 1847) onwards, Saull chipped in during the discussions—live banter again being encouraged after the disastrous Owen ban.[25] These could be spirited follow-ups, recapturing the old excitement, judging by the reports of a "sharp discussion" at the first Utilitarian Society meeting or the "animation" after Holyoake's sermon on the "Moral Remains of Genesis". A varied group of "disputants" was starting to show up, indicating that the Society was attracting many from outside the socialist orbit.[26] Here, for example, Saull would meet Josiah Mason, the Birmingham pen manufacturer who went on to found Mason's College (now Birmingham University). Of course, there were the obligatory discussions on universal suffrage. But good debates were also had after Holyoake's lecture on "Knowledge without Books". This undoubtedly appealed to Saull, who, with his hands-on museum, agreed that observation "should precede Book learning".[27]

How much the young bloods had taken over from Saull was shown by the reaction to the uproar caused by the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844). This expensive gloss on progressive geology and comparative anatomy, domesticated and dressed up to appeal to middle-class readers bored with the latest crop of novels, piqued interest and promoted parlour guessing games from its anonymity. The slow continuous ascent of life was made acceptable for a fireside family readership, as Secord has demonstrated. The "vestiges" were fossils, their footsteps tracing out a path to mankind. The process was as natural as a foetus growing through childhood to adulthood. Life was maturing, and underlying it was a kind of lawful continuous creation. To

25 *UR*, 12 May 1847, 47. We can gauge Saull's activity here, from his name appearing in the *UR* (for 1847 alone) on 26 May, 16 June, 28 July, 1, 8 Sept., 6, 13 Oct., 10 Nov., and 15 Dec.

26 *UR*, 14 Apr. 1847, 39; 8 Sept. 1847, 81. Saull's fellow "disputants" might include Charles Savage (interested in comparative religion), George Hooper ("Eugene", an Oxford Classics scholar), and Jonathan Duncan, the Cambridge-educated currency reformer, fellow member of the Metropolitan Parliamentary Reform Association, and author of many works, from the blasphemy laws to the rights of property, capital, and labour.

27 *UR*, 28 Apr. 1847, 43.

mitigate any materialist imputation, the author carefully explained that God had set the ball rolling, and unleashed a 'natural law', considered a sort of edict running through nature, to do the rest. *Vestiges* was to prove another key piece of dissolvent literature, corroding the traditional glue of religious society. For many literati, already sceptical, it added fuel to the fire.

Most activists would have first heard of *Vestiges* through their trusted platform speakers. These came at the book from all sides. Chilton hammered away in the *Movement* and *Reasoner*, irked, it seems, by this godly whitewash of his "Regular Gradation" series. First off the mark, he framed the argument. He thought the book a feather bed, catching those already slipping from orthodoxy, and that these falling souls would ultimately land on materialist bedrock. After all, if God can be dispensed with on the planet's day-to-day running, why do we need Him at all? There was "nothing new in all this", Chilton said, except that *Vestiges* saw 'law' somehow pushing life on, whereas "materialists consider that ... the higher forms of existence are merely increased developments of the lower".[28] God's whim would now become Nature's for many a soul in crisis, and Chilton recognized that even the anodyne *Vestiges* would "startle many" from their "slumbers".

By contrast, Emma Martin took a softly-softly approach. Not for her any "Jew Book" diatribes, or Holywell Street provocations. Hers was a "tone of mellowed soberness", as befitted a former evangelical Baptist used to persuading by dialogue at the door.[29] Like most infidels, she already accepted a geological rise "from the most simple up to the most complex—from the Lily ... up to the man" as evidence that nature was "the maker, and not God". Even before *Vestiges*, she had published a pamphlet, which recast Chilton's strident voice as reassuring patter: it had a "Querist" chatting to a "Theist" and convincing him or her that "man is but an improvement upon the lower animals". But, at the end of the day, the difference was only in tone, not intent. She was as anti-clerical as the rest. Matter itself had the power, it did not need God's blessing. With no Almighty there was no moral authority for the priest, who thereby had no right to enforce any "law which nature has not taught".[30]

28 J. A. Secord 2000, 310ff; Chilton 1846, 1847a, 1847b.
29 J. A. Secord 2000, 314–16; *Movement* 1 (6 July 1844): 239.
30 E. Martin 1844, 4–7.

As a separated wife and mother, and an apostate, she was hated all the more for it. Within days of her finishing a three-lecture course on *Vestiges* at John Street in June 1846, a scurrilous pamphlet announcing her death from "the pangs of a guilty conscience" was circulating. It was the sort beloved by Christians, showing death-bed repentances, which had been stock fare since the days of Voltaire and Paine. Her fabricated "recantation" was now added to the list, and nicely illustrated with a picture of a lady weeping over a tomb.[31] For a dead penitent, Mrs Martin continued in lively fashion at John Street.

Even Holyoake got in on the act, although usually not one to puff science. He gave a one-off talk at the Mechanics' Hall of Science on the "Origin of Man" as envisaged by *Vestiges*. Probably, as Secord says, he saw the book "extending the constituency for freethought" as it drew in middle-class freethinkers.[32] But firebrands still abounded. Another who pitted *Vestiges* against scriptural literalists on the eternal question, whence came man?, was Robert Cooper. He turned up at the Utilitarian Society on his first trip to London, having been lecturing at Hull on "The Origin of the Earth, and the Origin of Man; or, the author of the 'Vestiges of Creation,' versus the author of the Pentateuch".[33] He was another future luminary. His *Infidel's Text-Book* was already in-press.[34] Of the lot of them, he was the one destined to take over the uncompromising mantle on the human origins question.

How many interested artisans actually laid hold of a copy of *Vestiges* is a moot point. Secord claims few had direct contact, even the cheaper editions falling mostly into liberal middle-class hands.[35] The half-crown 'people's edition' was the cheapest. It was, for example, sold by the socialist stalwart Edward Truelove. Truelove had been an Edgeware Road butcher who supplied the social community with their Christmas fare.[36] As A1 branch secretary, he had taken his family off to Harmony, only to see it collapse. Undaunted, he returned as Secretary at John Street

31 *Reasoner* 1 (8 July 1846): 92–93; (22 July 1846): 127. John Street course *Reasoner* 1 (3 June 1846): 15.

32 J. A. Secord 2000, 310, 314; *Movement* 2 (29 Jan. 1845): 40. The sort shortly to cluster around John Chapman's bourgeois radical publishing house at 142 Strand (Ashton 2006), to whom Holyoake would extend a hand.

33 *Reasoner* 1 (16 June 1846): 30; *UR*, 12 May 1847, 47; 26 May 1847, 51.

34 *Reasoner* 1 (3 June1846): 16.

35 J. A. Secord 2000, 307.

36 *NMW* 10 (11 Dec. 1841): 192; 11 (17 Dec. 1842): 204.

in 1845. The institution was still going, despite the financial crash, even if they had to offer decorators "beautifying" the hall membership privilege in lieu of payment.[37] Truelove also set up an adjoining bookshop, at 22 John Street, with the 2/6 *Vestiges* top-billed in his ads. And for those who could not afford it, he sold a 4d abridgement.[38] There can be little doubt, therefore, that *Vestiges* ended up in the well-stocked John Street library.

But given the large number of radical coffee houses, discussion clubs, and social halls in the metropolis, the same might be said of their bookshelves. By 1840, there were an astonishing 1,600 coffee houses in London, many catering to artisans—this was the classic public sphere, where political consciousness was honed.[39] The trades, for instance, met in the Parthenium in St Martin's Lane, as did the Atheistical Society, while the Chartists preferred Huggett's in Lambeth, or Halliday's West Riding Coffee House in Holborn Hill. By contrast, the Christian Socialists met at the American Coffee House in Worship Street, while the Free Enquirers got together weekly at the Crown in Harrow Road. The list is endless, whatever your bent, there was a coffee house nearby for you. For freethinkers, there were also the Globe in Fleet Street, or Bailey's or the Hope Coffee House, both in Soho. For socialists, there were the Cambrian or Hudson's, both in Covent Garden. And atheists might fancy Southwell's Charlotte Street Institution, now gleefully taken over from the socialists and re-opened as the Paragon Hall and Coffee House.[40] Many had libraries and reading rooms, some actually setting aside specific nights for reading. And most had the resources to buy in the latest block-buster, especially when it suited their purpose. Since activists tended to cluster round one or other, they could undoubtedly have thumbed through a half-crown *Vestiges*, or even have afforded the 4*d* abridgement.

Then there were the bigger focal points of social activity. Lovett's National Association hall in Holborn had a reading room and a 700-volume library.[41] In fact, it was essential for the ubiquitous London socialist, Chartist, and freethinking groups to have a communal library

37 *UR*, 3 Mar. 1847, 28; Royle 1998 136.
38 *UR*, 30 June 1847, 62; J. A. Secord 2000, 306.
39 Simon 1960, 231; Royle 1974, 191; *OR* 1 (6 May 1843): 162.
40 Royle 1974, 89.
41 Stack 1999, 1028–29.

and reading room. At one of Saull's favourite's, the Finsbury Social Institution, in Goswell Road, they boasted proudly of "the addition, purchase, and loan of many valuable works", as well as "a coffee and reading room". While the Rotunda had a "constantly increasing library of literary and scientific works" in the 1840s.[42] In addition, there were the presses and radical book shops, the "geographic centers of the freethought movement"—social hubs which often encouraged reading: Holyoake's shop at 147 Fleet Street not only contained his printing press but set off a room specifically for readers.[43] The profusion of these radical reading places in London militates against interested artisans never having read a *Vestiges*. They might not have paid half-a-crown, but they could have picked it off any coffee shop shelf.

* * * *

Holyoake's extended hand to liberal Nonconformity and bourgeois radicals led to certain tensions and new accommodations. Queasy dialogues were started with receptive disputants.[44] Evening readings might include the Unitarian James Martineau's *Rationale of Religious Enquiry* (1836), a sensational work which argued that faith must not offend reason.[45] The Utilitarians were pushing beyond combativeness to get some perspective on fellow-travellers, and none intrigued them more than the scintillating young preacher George Dawson.[46] Here was an eclectic who pushed Protestant private judgement to its limits. Dawson was as happy talking at mechanics' institutions and Chartist halls as to his own Birmingham congregation. One handbill reported that

> Mr. Dawson's system is mainly Socialism, with an appendage of Christianity, and a slight admixture of Swedenborgianism, Mahometanism, and Rousseau-ism. His object hitherto has been to get as far as possible without the Church; and he is now struggling to get

42 *NMW* 11 (9 July 1842): 15; 13 (11 Mar. 1845): 287.
43 Mullen 1985, 226.
44 *Reasoner* 4 (18 Aug.1847): 457; Saull agreed that it was important to stretch a hand out: *UR*, 26 May 1847, 51.
45 *UR*, 8 Sept. 1847, 81. Saull took part in the animated discussions.
46 *UR*, 6 Oct. 1847, 89. That is not to say all disputants fell in line: the dry-as-dust 'Aliquis' (George Gwynne) uncompromisingly probed each outsider in turn, from the ethnologist Luke Burke to George Dawson.

> *outside of out*—so that the most appropriate name for his religion is one partly of his own coining, namely, OUTSIDE-OF-OUT-ARIANISM.[47]

They had to like a man who walked the 1848 Paris barricades with Emerson and urged free public libraries and secular schools. Such a nonconforming Nonconformist they could do business with.

All these meetings were reported in the house organ, the *Utilitarian Record*, appended weekly to the *Reasoner*. Together the paper took over the listings function and achieved a national sweep last reached by the *New Moral World*. Saull, as usual, stepped in with financial support. Where Holyoake asked in his "One-Thousand-Shilling-List" for a shilling from each of his 1,000 readers to recoup the paper's £50-a-year running costs (he got it, twice over), Saull pledged a sovereign yearly, and others followed suit.[48] In return came Holyoake's praise for Saull and "the strenuous opposition he ever gives to supernaturalism in the great name of science".[49] Given the Utilitarian's widening aegis, Holyoake was at last beginning to appreciate the use of science. To what extent Saull and Holyoake hobnobbed on geology is not recorded, although, at one Utilitarian meeting, Saull did relate "a geological anecdote of Robert Chambers".[50] Perhaps this was because Holyoake was in the process of issuing a third edition of *Paley Refuted in His Own Words*, newly dedicated to the Chambers brothers.[51] Since nearly all tittle-tattle about Chambers at the moment concerned his presumed paternity of the *Vestiges of Creation*,[52] it is possible that Saull had yet another smoking gun.

Out of justice, the *Reasoner* pointed visiting secularists to Saull's "excellent Geological Museum"—easy to find, just "a minute's walk from the General Post Office". Always it was "visitors" who were addressed, on the assumption that Londoners already knew the

47 *Reasoner* 6 (21 Feb. 1849): 117.

48 *UR*, 9 June 1847: 55; 22 Sept. 1847, 85; *Reasoner* 3 (31 July 1847): 400; and so on yearly. For Christian comments on the funding drive and Saull's contribution: *The Bible and the People for 1853*, n.s., 2: 7–13.

49 *Reasoner* 3 (31 July 1847): 400.

50 *UR*, 19 Jan. "1847" [1848], 15.

51 *Reasoner* 4 (5 Jan. "1847" [1848]): 83.

52 The *Vestiges*' author was still unknown. Chilton had heard through the grapevine—a leak from one of *Vestiges*' printers—that it was Robert Chambers: Royle 1976, 141–42; J. A. Secord 2000, 314; *Reasoner* 5 (22 Nov. 1848): 414.

museum well. This emporium had exploded in a decade, doubling in size. By now, the free museum was immensely "rich in curiosities" which were increasing weekly, with "Mr. Saul [*sic*] or an assistant"[53] on hand to explain their meaning. So much had accumulated that Saull's traveller and warehouseman, William Godfrey, doubled as the museum superintendent.[54] Welcoming a reporter from the Chartist *Northern Star* in 1846—a rag hated by the Tory press as a "pestilent publication" appealing to the "low and ignorant"[55]—Godfrey made an impression. He "conducts visitors with such thoroughly democratic urbanity, and explains the subject with such a graceful simplicity." Saull would also occasionally dispatch Godfrey to the Hunterian Museum with a fossil skull for Richard Owen to identify, rather treating the imperious Owen like a public servant.[56] But Saull's museum that greeted visitors in the 1840s was noticeably changing, as he shifted his focus on to the last stage in the rise towards Owenite man.

53 *Reasoner* 1 (6 Aug. 1846): 159.

54 Identified by the *Northern Star*, cross-matched with Saull's will, which bequeathed "To my Traveller and Warehouseman William Godfrey the sum of Three hundred pounds sterling": W. D. Saull Will, 31 Oct. 1855, Public Record Office, PROB 11/2215. William Godfrey was described by the *Northern Star*'s reporter in 1846 as "the author of the 'World's Catalogue of Geology'", although this has yet to be identified: *NS*, 31 Oct. 1846, 3.

55 *The Age*, 28 Aug. 1842, 4.

56 W. D. Saull to Richard Owen, 14 July 1851, British Museum (Natural History), Owen Collection, 23: ff. 112–15.