THE EARLY CAREER OF BISHOP CHARLES WALMSLEY
OSB DD FRS 1722-97

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THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE CHARLES WALMESLEY, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, died stone deaf on November 25th 1797, aged 75. Since 1997 marks the bi-centenary of his death, this is a tribute to a monk who was a mathematician and astronomer of international renown, for many years the doyen of the English Vicars Apostolic, and the father of the American hierarchy, through his consecration of Bishop John Carroll in 1790. No comprehensive biography of Walmesley has ever been attempted, for aspiring biographers have been daunted by the assertion that whilst he was at Wardour Castle, all his library, archives and papers went up in flames when the chapel and house at Bath were fired by the mob during the Gordon Riots in 1780. Because of his major involvement in the conflict between the Catholic Committee and some of the Vicars Apostolic in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, his later career has received much attention from scholars. His contribution to that conflict will not, therefore, be addressed here. What follows is an attempt to gather together what singed biographical fragments remain of those earlier and perhaps happier years of a man whom public opinion regarded in his mature years as the rising hope of stern unbending English Catholic conservatism [1].[1]

FAMILY

Charles Walmesley was born at Westwood Hall on the outskirts of Wigan, Lancashire, on 13 January 1722, the seventh son, and youngest but one, of twelve children, of the wealthy Lancashire Catholic squire and Wigan alderman, John Walmesley and his wife, Mary Greaves. The Walmesleys of Westwood were a cadet branch of the Showley Hall Walmesleys, and had settled first at Bishopgate House in Wigan in the late seventeenth century. The Walmesley parents being zealous Catholics and wealthy determined their sons should have a liberal education. Thus, Charles and his elder brother Richard [later Dom Peter Walmesley of St Gregory's] were educated at St Gregory's, Douai. The Walmesley cousinage was thick on the ground in the Benedictine houses throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Charles himself showed great affection for a niece of his, Teresa Walmesley, a nun of Cambrai, who was to die in prison during the French Revolution.

In later years, Charles sometimes returned to Lancashire to spend a few weeks each year at the Westwood estate with his family to whom he was devoted, declaring these vacations to be 'some of the happiest hours of his life.' 'It is not a little remarkable that a man of his character and acquirements should have been so passionately fond of angling with the rod and line. He would spend any leisure time allowed himself while at Westwood in this amusement, with the greatest patience, amply repaid, if he returned home with a few perch or tench', and in a reference to his future astronomical interests, the writer here, who knew him personally,

1 All references may be found at the end of this paper.

tells us that ‘when the night was serene, he s would observe the stars, a study he was very partial to’ [2].

The Walmesleys were related to some of the country’s leading Catholics. Charles, for instance had cousins among the Petres of Essex through a Petre marrying a Walmesley of Dunkenhalgh, and in the 1790s,in the heat of the Cisalpine controversy, Lord Petre, Walmesley’s ‘noble relation’ was to deprive the bishop, his kinsman, of his allowance in a bid to get Walmesley to soften his hard anti-Cisalpine line. The Walmesleys of Westwood also shared a chantry chapel [still in use] in Wigan parish church with their Catholic relatives and neighbours, the Gerards of Ince, and Lady Gerard was to share Bishop Walmesley’s hostility to the Cisalpines [3].

The study of physical and natural science, which was to be CharlesWalmesley’s ruling passion, had for long been associated with the family, for in the previous century, Walmesleys were to be found in a circle of Lancashire Catholic gentry studying topical scientific questions [4].

MONASTIC LIFE

After a classical education with the Douai Benedictines, Charles became a monk of St Edmund’s, Paris, being clothed with two others at Paris, 20th September 1738, and professed the following year. He studied at the Sorbonne, taking his Master’s degree in 1742, and his Licentiate in theology, with a distinction, followed in 1750. One of his teachers was the distinguished M. Delore. Walmesley attained the accolade of a Sorbonne doctorate in divinity, after having pursued one of the most arduous courses of study at that time. He was, therefore, one of only two Sorbonne doctors produced by the English monks in the eighteenth century As a graduate, he was entitled to take a benefice, Walmesley being provided to the Cluniac priory of Saint-Marcel, near Chalons-sur-Marne, whose *mense* belonged to St Edmund’s. [5].

The years of intensive study have left little evidence of Walmesley’s early monastic life, although his talents must have been recognised early, for at the Visitation of 1748, he was holding the officer of Zelator, that is, assistant to the Novice Master, and was a community Depositarius in 1749 [6]. He was also at this time in charge of the studies of the young religious at St Edmund’s, two of his pupils going on to defend their theses with public applause, and was recognised as a teacher by the Parlement of Paris. On the completion of his doctorate, however, he rocketed into the office of Prior [1749] and strove to heighten awareness of and enthusiasm for the new learning among members of the community by helping to found the Society of St. Edmund, a debating society at which monks and their lay friends delivered learned papers, over which Walmesley presided as rector and guided the debates [7].

Walmesley was to spend fifteen years in Paris [1738-1753]: for the last four, he was prior of St Edmund’s [1749-1753]. While prior, he supported his Community’s traditional affiliation to the Jacobite cause, receiving a foundation for masses from the family of the Duke of Berwick, and through the acceptance of other legacies he provided for the educating of youths for entry into the Community. The most illuminating survey of his life up until this point comes from a comprehensive reference sent to Propaganda in Rome in April 1756 during the search for a coadjutor Vicar Apostolic for the Western District. In this, Walmesley obtained flawless references from representatives from the Maurist and Cluniac Benedictines, who noted that he had managed his benefice well.

They declared that in their opinion he was orthodox, and that following the attainment of a distinction in the licentiate in theology, he had become a distinguished mathematician, thus providing a model for other English Catholics. However, the reference continued, he had not been an unqualified success as Prior, since he had become obsessed with his mathematical studies and neglected his obligations to the community. Furthermore, he had been reproached by the Archbishop of Paris for not exercising enough vigilance, and especially for not having been sufficiently firm with the Procurator of St Edmund's, who had caused widespread scandal in Paris. The law had been called upon to contain his excesses. There is one other tantalising hint of Walmesley's low standing with the authorities during his priorship. Writing to Christopher Stonor, the clergy agent in Rome in November 1753, the superior of the secular house of studies in Paris, St Gregory's, Joseph Holden, mentioned that Walmesley and his Procurator had an even worse standing in the eyes of the archbishop of Paris than did Holden himself. Holden was reputed to hold unorthodox opinions and had amassed heavy debts for the seminary by ill-considered investment in property he had purchased for the college in Paris [8].

At the General Chapter in the summer of 1753, Walmesley refused to be re-elected as prior, presumably because of the difficulties he had experienced, but was appointed as a Magister of Theology and a Censor, both offices recognising his intellectual ability [9]. After Chapter, he did not return to Paris, but went instead to La Celle, St Edmund's country estate near Meaux in Brie. That he was loved and respected, at least by some of the community at St Edmund's is vouched for in three poems written in 1753 by the young monk John Barnes to honour him. The first, in August, marked his return from General Chapter that summer and expresses the author's grief that Walmesley's departure to the mission was imminent, and the second two, in November, still addressing him as 'Prior' marked his feast-day, and congratulated him on coming to La Celle [10]. This extract from the first gives the flavour:

TO THE R.F.D. CHARLES WALMESLEY, AT HIS RETURN FROM CHAPTER, THE YEAR 1753.
When he refused the Priorship, and it was thought he would go Upon the Mission very soon.
POEM

All hail, dear Charles! All hail, thy safe Return
Shall glad thy friends, and cause thy foes to mourn.
Thy foes to mourn: may sorrow be their fate,
Who all that's learned scorn, that's virtuous hate!
Once more all hail! Clad in thy native Worth,
Titles to Thee are needless to shine forth.
The self bright Sun needs not to give the Day,
The spurious Blaze of a reflected Ray;
Whilst gloomy planets wrapt in home-born night
Their glittering borrow from a foreign Light....
Whether Superior o'er us you preside,
(So mild, you please then even when you chide,)
Or subject humble thee again we view
Still virtue's Paths with equal heat pursue...
Tis now four summers since we 'gan to share
The genial fruits of thy paternal Care;

Tis now four summers since on all you strove
To spread the sweets of an impartial love.
Still on thy House thy gen'rous Care bestow;
With equal heat may still thy Bosom glow;
Thy House's welfare willing yet attend;
The Father now no more, but still the Friend...
Hear, gracious Heav'n! Our Vows propitious hear!
Never, oh, Never may that Day appear,
From Fate's black Records blot the joyless Day,
When fatal Orders from Superior sway,
Shall from our Bosom tear our Charles away!
Or if his Talents, hitherto confin'd,
Must now blaze forth, the Pride of all Mankind.

PROCURATOR IN CURIA (ROME) 1754-1756

Any hopes of more quiet fishing beside the flowing and abundant streams of the Grand Morin were, however, dashed, for in 1754, Walmesley was appointed the Procurator in Curia, the Roman agent of the English monks, an office which had lain vacant for some years. He travelled to Rome that December, his main objective being to secure favourable conditions at Propaganda Fide for the monks who were still smarting from the recent victory of the Vicars Apostolic in the brief Apostolicum Ministerium of May 1753, which had granted the bishops partial jurisdiction over monks on the mission. Walmesley was soon popular in Roman ecclesiastical circles and secured the dropping of the impractical sexennium requirement, which stipulated missioner monks return to their monasteries every six years for a three month period so as to preserve their monastic spirit [11]. His mathematical mind took easily to coping with the administration of procuratorial business. Dom Placid Waters, who succeeded him in the post of Procurator at the end of the century and who became the executor of Bonnie Prince Charlie's daughter, the Duchess of Albany, congratulated Walmesley on 'the notes of his agency' being 'in much better order than any of your successors'. It is probable that Walmesley's portrait which hangs today in the English College in Rome and appears to depict him in an English Benedictine habit, was painted during his time as Procurator.

Walmesley was enthusiastic about Rome because, as we shall see later, it allowed him entry to Roman scientific circles searching for answers to the same questions as he himself was pursuing. Meanwhile, he remained Rector in absentia and a corresponding member of the Society of St Edmund still meeting in Paris [12]. Given the traditional adherence of the Benedictines and his own family to the Stuarts, it was inevitable that Walmesley would feel at home in Roman Jacobite circles, and would visit the Stuart Court at the Palazzo Muti. He was granted James Ill's protection immediately on his arrival in the city, and the Pretender's patronage was to be instrumental later in Walmesley being appointed Vicar Apostolic in 1756. Walmesley responded on one occasion to the 'constant civilities' he had received from the Court by dispatching as an acknowledgement half a dozen bottles of rack and as many of ram [13].

COADJUTOR IN THE WESTERN DISTRICT

In the spring of 1756, Walmesley, by now well-known in Roman circles, was appointed coadjutor to the Benedictine Lawrence York, then sixty-nine, who had recommended him for the office. The report to Propaganda indicates that he was the first-choice candidate. He had managed his benefice well, was 'of sound doctrine', a distinguished mathematician, and had studied Canon Law at Rome [presumably a reference to his work as Procurator]. Walmesley was consecrated Vicar Apostolic privately in the Sodality Chapel of the English College in Rome by Cardinal Lanti on 21 December 1756, and took the titular see of Rama, *in partibus infidelium*, in Asia Minor. In the following summer he wrote to the fathers assembled at the General Chapter in London, expressing his wish to continue his attachment to the Congregation as bishop, and was consequently granted a seat in the Chapter. Walmesley therefore continued to attend the General Chapter from 1761 until 1785, when Bishop Gregory Sharrock replaced him. Although the Chapter felt it could not support him financially on his becoming a Vicar Apostolic, an annuity of £5 was granted him by the North and South Provinces, and by Dieulouard, Douai and Paris. The 1761 South Province Chapter ordered the Benedictine missioner at Bath to provide for Walmesley's maintenance there [14].

Once Bishop Walmesley had arrived in England and settled at the Bell Tree House, the home of the Benedictine mission in Bath, he can be glimpsed carrying out his mandate from the monks. Thus, in his report on his District to Propaganda Fide in the spring of 1759, he noted the distress caused by the brief *Apostolicum Ministerium* among the Regular Clergy in the Western District. From 1761, he was in the habit of delivering New Year addresses to his District. Not surprisingly, he seems to have had less time to address scientific questions directly. Nevertheless, in November 1761, Walmesley wrote to Dr Thomas Birch [1705-1766], the secretary of the Royal Society, an Anglican clergyman and Whig historian, asking him to accept a copy of his book written 'some years ago., as an illustration of Newton's Theory of the Moon', which a friend in Italy had had published after Walmesley had left Italy. The bishop admitted its imperfections, but hoped Birch, whom he had met in London the previous year, would accept it as a testimony of Walmesley's high regard for his learning and merit. Birch was one of a number of lay and clerical friends whose company the bishop continued to enjoy at Bath, where he was always ready to extend hospitality to ailing monks desirous to take the waters [15].

By 1763, Bishop Lawrence York of the Western District was eager to retire and in May recommended that Charles Walmesley succeed him. Thus, at the beginning of 1764, Walmesley became Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, the poorest of the four Districts, and the one traditionally governed by a monk. He marked his promotion by his first Pastoral Letter, in Latin. The Old Pretender had died in 1766, after the longest reign [sixty four years] in English history, and the Pope refused to recognise the succession of Charles Edward, but we find Walmesley in Bath, aware of his earlier intimate connections with the Jacobite Court, professing loyalty to Bonnie Prince Charlie at the beginning of 1767. Even so, he cautioned the Benedictine President from writing 'an extremist letter' to the new king in December 1767, and suggested instead a model he might adopt. Even as Vicar Apostolic, Walmesley still seems to have been actively involved in the promotion of Benedictine studies [16].

During the next decade of his career [1770-1780], Walmesley settled into his role as Vicar Apostolic, keeping a particular eye on monks working in his District and making preparations

for another monk to become his coadjutor in the future. He continued to attend the monks' General Chapters and the Provincial Chapters of the South Province, providing for many of the secular clergy further proof of his predictable bias towards members of his own Order. Walmesley saw a modest expansion of Catholicism in the District which was reflected in an increase of clergy and in the consecration of the Arundel chapel at Wardour at which he presided in 1776. His correspondence with Cardinal Corsini, the Protector of the English College, and with the Benedictine procurator, Placid Waters, continued to demonstrate his easy familiarity with curial affairs. He dutifully implemented in his District the bull which ordered the suppression of the Jesuits, and through his 1777 Pastoral Letter explained to his flock why the Holy See had permitted the suppression of various feasts. [17].

In 1770, he published his major religious book, *The General History of the Christian Church... by Sig.Pastorini,* a commentary on the Book of Revelation, from the pen of one who saw the world through the eyes of a Newtonian scientist and had sufficient regard to political events to be uneasy at the state of affairs. The book, frequently translated and edited, was avidly read by those oppressed in France during the Revolution and in Ireland during the pre-Emancipation troubles. Its message was later paraphrased in a shorter work, *Ezekiel's Vision Explained*, London 1778. Both books were written to record Walmesley's anxiety that there was a 'terrible rejection of God at present', and that divine retribution was just around the corner.

Apart from the eccentricity of their contents, the message of the two books reveals for the first time the onset of that dark pessimism which haunted and overpowered the bishop throughout the entire Cisalpine controversy. This crusade on behalf of the truth and for the embatttled Church besieged on all sides by the forces of darkness and rationalism made Walmesley determined to have his apocalyptic jeremiads translated into all major European languages to warn against impending disaster. Given this frame of mind, it is not surprising that he greeted the first Relief Act for Catholics, passed by Parliament in 1778, with caution. He instructed his flock to pray daily for the royal family, but to avoid all disputes and anything that might give offence [18].

In the autumn of 1778, the bishop, aged only 56, was so weighed down by deafness that -he asked for a coadjutor. Insistent that he be given a fellow Benedictine, he tabled the names of Gregory Cowley and Gregory Sharrock as possible candidates, but initially preferred Cowley for the office. Slowly, however, he swung around to supporting Sharrock, and at the beginning of 1780, gave him some fatherly advice to the latter, although he admitted his own 'stock is short and my abilities very narrow' [19]. Sharrock was eventually appointed as Walmesley's coadjutor in 1781, that is, after the catastrophe of the Gordon Riots in the previous year. The rioters, as has already been mentioned, fired the new Catholic chapel in Bath, and the missioner, Bede Brewer, narrowly escaped with his life. Walmesley himself sadly admitted that all his scientific papers and vicarial documents were destroyed in the flames, which explains the abundance of archival material relating to him after this time in comparison with what survives from before 1780. The appreciable number of his surviving books, however, which unmistakable signature, originally at Westwood and Inglewood, and later at Woolhampton and Downside, and elsewhere suggest, however, that at least part of his library survived the destruction. [20].

WALMESLEY'S CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE

Walmesley's contribution to science has long deserved specialist research. What follows is largely a summary of the findings of the historian of celestial mechanics, Dr Curtis Wilson of Annapolis, U.S.A. who, being faced with other writing deadlines, felt unable to undertake the research required for a comprehensive study of Walmesley's scientific [21].

The early appearance and sophistication of Walmesley's scientific studies presume that he had been attracted to questions relating to mathematics, astronomy and Newtonian science quite early on in his career, perhaps even before he was attached to the Sorbonne. Walmesley's passion for science and for mathematical astronomy is revealed in his papers to the Society of St Edmund which was modelled on the Royal Society and had its own library and science museum. Walmesley became founding member and rector in 1749. In comparison with the junior monks' scientific fantasies and tentative or experiments, Walmesley's papers stand out by reason of their very considerable measure of expertise and rigour. In them, he demonstrated his acquaintance with contemporary mathematicians and Newtonian scientists such as the astronomer-royal, James Bradley [1693-1762], Jacques Cassini [1677-1756], Matthew Stewart [1717-85] and John Machin [ob. 1751]. In the Society's minutes, it is impressive to see Walmesley encouraging the efforts of the young and those less academic members of his community.

In November 1747 Alexis-Claude Clairaut [1713-65] announced to the Paris Academic des Sciences that Newton's inverse-square law implied only about half the observed motion of the Moon's apse [the apse being the fiducial point of the orbit from which the monthly inequality in motion is measured; in the Moon's case, it is close to but not steadily identical with the orbital point farthest from the Earth]. In December 1748 Walmesley attempted to persuade Clairaut that the source of the discrepancy was Clairaut's use of a uniformly rotating ellipse as a first-order approximation. Failing to persuade Clairaut, he proceeded to write a book, *Theorie du mouvement des apsides en general, et en particulier des apsides de I 'orbite de la lune* [Paris , 1749; in English, London, 1754], giving three different derivations of the motion of the Moon's apse. The first of these was based on Newton's Proposition 39 of Book I of the Principia, the second on Proposition 40, and the third on a theorem enunciated by John Machin, together with calculated values of the diurnal motion of the Moon' s apse in the syzygies and quadratures as given by Newton in the first edition of the *Principia*. In all three derivations Walmesley arrives at values for the apsidal motion in good agreement with the observed value.

Unfortunately, Walmesley 's derivations involve some mistaken and other at least questionable assumptions. The third derivation can be accorded little weight, because the applicability of Machin' s theorem is hypothetical, and the route by which Newton arrived at his calculated values is unknown. In the first two derivations, Walmesley articulates Newton's propositions in Leibnizian differential notation, and shows skill in integrating. But he assumes that the transverse component of the perturbing force [at right angles to the radius vector from Earth to Moon] contributes nothing to the apsidal motion, and this, as Clairaut discovered by 1749, is incorrect. Walmesley follows John Machin, another Newtonian loyalist, in assuming that a general derivation of the apsidal motion is possible without entering into a detailed accounting for perturbational effects by successive approximations. The assumption was not obviously wrong; it took the later development of celestial mechanics to show that the more arduous, detailed account was necessary.

Another publication by Walmesley in 1749 was a translation from English into French of Roger Gotes's *Harmonia Mensurarum* [1722], together with a preface and commentary. The work was published under Walmesley's name as *Analyse des Mesures, des Rapports, et des Angles: ou Reduction des Integrates des Logarithmes, et des Arcs de Cercle* [Paris, 1749], and is dedicated to Walmesley's patron, the Comte d'Argensoh. A second edition appeared in 1753. The chief importance of the translation is that it transmitted to mathematicians on the Continent a set of rules, first formulated by Newton and by James Gregory, then given by Cotes, for carrying out numerical integrations. Numerical integrations are resorted to in the case of functions not formally integrable; they are at best approximate, and the rules show how to reduce the inevitable inaccuracies to a minimum. The first proposal to use these rules in physical astronomy was made by the distinguished Slav astronomer, Roger Joseph Boscovich S.J. [1711-87], in the essay he submitted to the Paris Academy contest of 1752 concerning the mutual perturbations of Jupiter and Saturn; his essay won the *proxime accessit*, and Boscovich published it at his own expense in Rome in 1756. Boscovich, however, did not carry out any actual numerical integrations. Apparently the first large-scale numerical integration ever performed was that involved in the determination, by Clairaut and two fellow calculators, Jerôme le Francais Lalande and Mme Nicole-Reine Etable de Labrière Lepaute, of the return of Halley's Comet in 1759. The very sizeable perturbations of Halley's Comet by the planet Jupiter could have been determined in no other way than by numerical integration; the rules supplied by Cotes were thus instrumental in the successful prediction of the comet's close approach to the Sun. Clairaut undoubtedly read Boscovich's essay, which cites Walmesley's book as the source of the rules.

Walmesley had by this time achieved some distinction among European scientists, although his fame had not yet reached England. In 1747, he had delivered a paper on comets to the Paris Academy of Sciences, and in the same year had entered into the current debate in Paris between the encyclopedist Jean le Rond d'Alembert, the mathematical analyst Leonhard Euler [1707-83], and the mathematician and astronomer Alexis-Claude Clairaut [1713-65] over 'the problem of the Three Bodies - the disturbance caused by the continual attraction of a third body on the motion of one body revolving around another'. Parisian scientific circles of the time were busy applying Newton's gravitational principles to theoretical astronomy, and were working in particular on the question of perturbations in the orbit of the Moon [22].

Walmesley's defence of Sir Isaac Newton's theory of Fluxions 'was received with 'universal applause' in Europe and, following the book's publication, Walmesley was awarded the Diploma of Frederick II of Prussia, and in February 1750, he became Fellow of the Royal Society of Berlin, where Euler's influence was strong. On 1 November 1750, Walmesley became a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. He was listed as a foreign Fellow, on the 'high recommendation' of d'Alembert, the astronomer Pierre Charles Lemonnier, and the biologist, the Comte de Buffon. There had been a rapid growth of such scientific societies like those in Berlin and London by the mid-eighteenth century, and it was common for membership of one to become a sign of acceptability in another. In most of these 'Republics of Science', talk on religious and political affairs was banned. The *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society of London provided a forum in which Walmesley could discuss his theories in a series of papers he published between 1756 and 1761. It seems that Walmesley was also contributing to the discussions regarding Britain's adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in 1751, although the degree of his contribution is not known with any certainty; it seems to have

been along the lines of informal consultation with other members of the Royal Society such as Lord Macclesfield and its President, the astronomer-royal, James Bradley.

During the 1750s, we find Walmesley attempting, like another English scientist, Thomas Simpson, to derive the precession of the equinoxes [i.e. the earlier occurrence of the equinoxes in each successive sidereal year] and the nutation [i.e. the oscillation of the earth's axis making the motion of the pole of the equator round the pole of the ecliptic wavy] through the use of Newtonian-style, geometrical procedures. Both Walmesley and Simpson failed, as had Newton himself, because they lacked a worked-out dynamics of rotational motion, such as d'Alembert successfully put forward as early as 1749.

The 1740s also saw the rise to prominence in scientific circles of the future Scots bishop, George Hay, another Catholic priest determined to demonstrate how Newtonianism might be extended to the moral sciences and natural philosophy. Both Hay and Walmesley were disciples of the Scottish Newtonian philosopher, Colin MacLaurin [1698-1745], whose mathematical work on Newton's theory of fluxions Walmesley used. Both Hay and Walmesley were to be found in Rome in the 1750s when the philosopher Pope, Benedict XIV, was encouraging Newtonian science in ecclesiastical circles [23].

Walmesley's two year residence in Rome, 1754-56, brought him recognition in Roman scientific circles, and allowed him to introduce them to the fruits of contemporary English science. His time in Rome coincided with the residence there of Boscovich, and Walmesley, given their shared interest in mathematics and astronomy must certainly have met him in Rome, It must have been in Rome too that Walmesley compiled the book, *De inaequalitatibus motuum lunarium*, which was published in Florence in 1758, that is, after he had returned to England and become a Vicar Apostolic. This was the book presented to Thomas Birch in 1761, mentioned above, 'written as an illustration of Newton's Theory of the Moon', which Walmesley had given to a friend who had published it after his departure from Italy.

In Rome, Walmesley's importance can be gauged by the distinguished circle in which he moved. Among his associates was the Barnabite Newtonian scientist, Paolo Frisi, a member of the Ecole de Milan, friend of Pietro Verri and the Parisian philosophe, d'Alembert, and involved in the publication of the militant journal *Il Caffé*. Frisi belonged to one of the Tuscan academies which were generally interested in astronomy and physics, and his patronage may well have been behind the publication of Walmesley's *De inaequalitatibus* in Florence. The Minim, Francois Jacquier, the Newtonian mathematician and physicist prominent in Rome, who held the Chair of Experimental Physics at the Roman College of Sapienza during Walmesley's time in Rome, was also a good friend of Walmesley [24]

Walmesley's visit to Mount Etna, mentioned in an early nineteenth-century biographical note, can only have taken place when he was resident in Rome. He is said to have visited it 'once or twice, and made many observations'. Sir William Hamilton only arrived in Naples in 1764 as Extraordinary Envoy to the Court of Naples, that is, after Walmesley had left for England, and only then commenced his thorough research into vulcanism and began gathering his collection of archaeological exhibits. Walmesley's two succcessors as Procurator, Dom Augustine Walker and Dom Placid Waters knew Hamilton personally. If Walmesley had left before the advent of Hamilton, he nevertheless kept pace with Hamilton's findings in regard to volcanoes and earthquakes [25].

Walmesley's appointment as coadjutor Vicar Apostolic and his return to England in 1756 gave him less time for his science, and at one point during his long episcopate must have

occurred the wilful rejection of scientific investigation famously described later by Charles Butler. Finding himself unconsciously describing geometric diagrams with the paten on the corporal during Mass one morning, Walmesley was so appalled that he vowed to have nothing to do with science again. When his dereliction of mathematics was mentioned to d'Alembert, the philosopher expressed great concern at the loss. There is an echo here of the famous story from the Dominican, Roger Bacon, of another English bishop, St Edmund of Abingdon, whose pious mother appeared to him in a dream and chided him for his consuming enthusiasm for mathematics. She seized his right hand, painted three circles within it, in each of which she wrote the names of the Trinity, and told him to concentrate on these alone. Edmund immediately transferred to the study of theology. A Benedictine source suggests that the rejection of science occurred after the destruction of Walmesley's papers in the Gordon Riots in 1780, which he took to be the judgement of God on his attachment to science. It was not an easy vow for Walmesley to keep, however, for Butler goes on to tell us that 'if a mathematical subject chanced to be mentioned, his countenance would brighten, and reveal his suppressed affection for mathematic lore'..

Despite this vow, Walmesley continued his friendship with scientists of all colours. He corresponded, for instance, with Peter Canvane [1720-1786], the American physician who introduced castor oil into England, and who was a neighbour of Walmesley in Bath, and we have already discussed his friendship with Thomas Birch during this period. It was in his early years as Vicar Apostolic that his papers on the irregularities in the motion of satellites were published in *Philosophical Transactions*, and complimentary copies of his most popular work, the quasi-scientific, *The General History of the Christian Church... by Signor Pastor ini*, [London 1771], were sent to the Italian Newtonian Paolo Frisi in 1781. As bishop, he was still reading in the 1770s the latest works on motion and attraction in astronomy, works like the Bishop Hugh Hamilton's [1729-1805] Four Introductory Lectures in Natural Philosophy [London 1774]. A copy of this work bears Walmesley's signature, and had descended to his great nephew and namesake by 1802 [26].

It seems that the bishop continued to remain fascinated with astronomy during his later years. In 1789, Walmesley drew up a short paper on 'Elements of the Orbit of the Comet of 1789'. While air balloons, about which he was fully informed, were the fashionable topic of the day and perhaps then the nearest thing to space probes, his sights were still set on the stars. It is said that in Bath he 'encouraged and assisted' his neighbour, the distinguished astronomer, Sir William Herschel, another member of the Royal Society, telescope builder and discoverer of the planet Uranus in 1780, who read papers on astronomy to the Bath Philosophical Society during 1781. As Bishop Walmesley approached seventy, he was invited by his fellow monk, Benet Pembridge, to accompany him to see Herschel's famous telescope at Windsor in 1790. Pembridge, the editor of the 1797 edition of Signor Pastorini, was one of the bishop's stoutest supporters in his long drawn-out clashes with the Cisalpines which were to absorb his last years. Politics had overtaken science [27]

REFERENCES & SOURCES

1 Surveys of Walmesley's life will be found in Ampleforth MSS, Allanson, *Biographies*, II, 1-21; Lille, Archives du Nord, 18 H 2; *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xx, 614-16; *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXVII, December 1797, 107; J. Gillow, *Bibliographical Dictionary of the English*

Catholics, London, n.d., vol. v, 569-70; Andrews' *Weekly Orthodox Journal*, 2n August 1834, pp. 65-9; M. Picot, *Memoires pour servir à I 'histoire ecclesiastique pendant le dix-huitième siècle*, Paris 1857, vii, 339; A. Le Glay, *Notice sur Charles Walmesley*, Lille 1858; G. Scott, 'Seventeenth-and Eighteenth-Century English Benedictine Portraits: a first listing', in *English Benedictine History Symposium*, 13, 1995, pp. 66-127 (for a description of the many portraits of Walmesley). As Vicar Apostolic, see M. Bradbury,'Bishop Walmesley's Correspondence: Glimpses of his Character and Concerns', in A. Bellenger, ed., *Fathers in Faith. The Western District 1688-1988*, Bath 1991, pp. 31-40, and Gary L. Nelson, *Charles Walmesley and the Episcopal Opposition to English Catholic Cisalpinism, 1782-1797*, PhD. Dissertation, 1977, Tulane University, U.S.A.

2 *Orthodox Journal*, February 1819, pp. 65-66. Charles Walmesley's elder brother John became a mercer of Wigan, Berks.R. O., D/Ebt F26, Notebook of Bryan Barrett, 1752-53]. The Walmesleys left Westwood in the 1890s and moved to Inglewood, Kintbury, Berks., bringing their chapel, stone by stone, with them. Westwood House [see *Wigan Observer*, 12 February 1960, for a photograph of the house and chapel] was demolished at the beginning of this century, although estate cottages, a heated garden wall and many flashes and lakes remain on the estate [engraving of Westwood House in E. Twycross, *Mansions of England and Wales*, 1847, vol. 3]. The Westwood library, containing many recusant books was dispersed in 1929, many of them finding a home at Douai Abbey, Woolhampton, Berks., the successor of Charles Walmesley's original community in Paris.

3 Lille, Archives du Nord, 18 H, 64, 1791 29 April,Walmesley to Walker; Clifton, 1791 vol., 1791 10 July, 2 Nov, Walker to Walmesley; 1772-88 vol., 1786 30 Nov., Walmesley to G. Sharrock. 1783 18 Dec., B. Brewer to Walmesley; 1792 vol, 1792 2 & 6 March, Walmesley to Lady Gerard. 1792 14 May, Walker to Walmesley. 1793 vol., 1793 12 April, Douglass to Walmesley.

4 C.Webster, 'Richard Towneley [1629-1707]and the Towneley Group', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 118, 1967, pp. 51 -76.

5 Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Fondi Latini, 9159, fo. 16 [information from Dr. L. Brockliss]. Walmesley's official portrait now at Downside, probably painted soon after he was made Vicar Apostolic in 1756, shows the doctor's stole on his right shoulder.

6 Woolhampton, Douai Abbey. Visitation Book of St Edmund's, Paris.

7 Allanson, *History*, II, 184, 1749 General Chapter. Walmesley was elected prior following the refusal of Wilfrid Constable. The volumes containaing the proceedings of the Society of St Edmund are at Douai Abbey, Woolhampton, VII. A. 1.1. ; an account of the society will be found in G. Scott, *Gothic Rage Undone. English Monks and the Enlightenment*, Bath 1992, pp. 155-9.

8 Rome, Propaganda Fide, SOCG, 765. Woolhampton, Douai Abbey, St Edmund's Mass Obligation Book, 1767: entries for 1752. Archives of the Archbishop of Westminster [AAW] Ep. Var. XIII, 1753 5 Nov., Holden to Stonor. See letter of Green, 1753 8 Nov., for suspicions of Holden's Jansenism.

9 Allanson MSS, *History*, II, p191. Lille 18 H 18 1753 ?Oct, Augustine Walker's speech on becoming Prior in Paris, detailing the scandalous state into which the house had fallen, but calling Walmesley an 'able and good man'.

10 Woolhampton, Douai Abbey. VII.A.3. 'Barnes', 1753 August, Poems by Dom John Baraes. Barnes was also a member of the Society of St Edmund, Walmesley having approved of his paper 'On Fire as fluid invironing earth as a atmosphere', in February 1750. He was Secretary of the Society 1751 to 1752, and taught Humanities at La Celle, 1753-4. The poems dedicated to Walmesley are: pp. 110-113, 'To the R.F.D. Charles Walmesley, at his Return from the Chapter, the Year 1753. When he had

refused the Priorship, and it was thought he would go Upon the Mission very soon. Poem', 'To the Same when Prior, on his Feast Day 1753, Novber. 4', pp. 164-66, 'Ad R.D. Carolum Walmesley. De adventu ad Cellas, Gratulatio'.

11 Allanson MSS, *History* II, p.200. Scott, *Gothic Rage*, p.74.

12 Clifton, 1792 vol., 1792 19 May, Waters to Walmesley. Walmesley's papers read in Paris were: 'De Praecessione Aequinoxium et Axis Terrae Nutatione' [28 May 1755], and 'De Inaequalitatibus Motum Terrae' [27 June 1755], both published later in *Philosophical Transactions*.

13 Stuart Papers, Windsor Castle, RA/SP 350/193,1754 29 Sept., 365/59,1756 28 September, John Placid Howard OSB to James III; 380/134,1758 16 April, Howard to Edgar; 353/63, 1755 6 Jan., 362/96, 1756 3 May, 367/164, 1757 3 Jan., James III to Howard; 363/101, 1756 5 July, Lawrence York OSB to James III; 363/115, 1756 10 July, 365/163, 1756 13 Oct., Walmesley to Edgar. The Walmesleys were traditionally Jacobite in sympathy, cf. Preston, Lancashire R.O., Eileen M. Hearn, *Catherine Walmesley. an English Jacobite and Catholic at the Time of the '15* [thesis of April 1967].

14 Rome, Propaganda Fide, SOCG 765/9, Acta 126/9 ff. 101-07, 1756 6 April, 1756 6 April. B. Hemphill, *The Early Vicars Apostolic in England*, London 1954, 145. Windsor, Stuart Papers, 362/96, 363/101, 363/115, 365/59, 367/164, 380/134, 1756 3 May, James III to Howard, 5 July, York to James III, 10 July, Walmesley to Edgar, 28 Sept, Howard to James III, 1757 3 Jan, James IE to Howard; 1758 16 April, Howard to Edgar. Lille 18 H 18,1756 Sept, Howard to Walker. Lille 18 H 60, 1756 6 July, Spinelli to Howard. J. C. Fowler, *The Benedictines in Bath during a Thousand Years*, Yeovil 1895, 79. Allanson, *History*, II, 211-12,1757 General Chapter. Allanson, 'Appendix', p.504, the 1781 General Chapter cancelled the Bath mission's duty to provide Walmesley's maintenance. Woolhampton, 'Accounts of St Edmund's Paris', shows the house paying 675 livres for Walmesley's annuity in 1759; St Edmund's, Paris, 'Mass Obligation Book' [insertion in Augustine Kellet's hand], indicates that St Edmund's was paying Walmesley's annuity until the outbreak of the French Revolution; Allanson, Records, 230. 'Declaration of St Edmund's Property' indicates that the annuity was £30 in c.l 792. Downside, North Province, Account Book no. 3 [of Benedict Steare, Provincial of York], p. 99, shows 'quota' of £5 being paid to Walmesley in 1774.

15 Rome, Propaganda Fide, SC, 1741-60, Anglia 4, ff.433-37, 1759 8 March, Walmesley to Propaganda. J. A. Williams, *Bath and Rome*, Bath 1963, p. 49 notes his visits to Ugbrooke in 1759 and 1763. Wigan Archives, RM 1549, for new year addresses, given in 1761,1763,1766,1772,1776,1779,1783,1785. British Library, Add. MSS 4320 f.93, 1761 21 Nov, Walmesley to Birch. Woolhampton, Scott Box, 1766 16 April, Walmesley to Howard. For bibliography of Walmesley's published works as Vicar Apostolic, see F.Blom, J. Blom, F. Korsten, G. Scott, *English Catholic Books 1701-1800. A Bibliography*, Aldershot 1996, nos. 2862-2900.

16 Rome, Propaganda Fide. Anglia. Acta 133/9, 10. Catholic Record Society, vol. 56, 1964, 196, for Walmesley's confirmations at the Benedictine mission of Marlborough in 1765.AAW, Ware Series 6. 3 shelf 43, p. 41,1764 Pastoral on Indulgences. Nancy, Archives Dép., H 77, 1767,14 Dec, 1769 6 Feb, CW to Naylor. Douai Abbey, Woolhampton, C/III/R, 'A Method of Studies adapted to the Professed of the Engl. Ben. Congregation by the R. Rev. Ch. Walmesley'; this MS dates from the 1760s, although Walmesley may well have compiled the course whilst he was either prior in Paris in the 1750s, or, more probably, when he became Magister of Theology in 1753. This course is discussed in Scott, Gothic Rage Undone, 167-8, and H. Aveling, 'The Education of Eighteenth-Century English Monks', *Downside Review*, 79, 255, Spring 1961, 135-152, although Aveling was unaware that Walmesley was the author. AAW 1765 c.May, Challoner to Stonor. 'Walmesley is in town and complains about the Oaths, but tells

me the Benedictines will not petition because of fear'. RA SP 438/162, 1767 14 Feb, CW to Charles Edward.

17 Nancy, Archives Dép., H 77, 1770 2 May, CW to Naylor & 1777 6 Mar, CW to Naylor . Rome, English College Archives, 1777 9 Oct., CW to Waters, and nos. 50: 3, 3.9, 4.1, 6.13, 7, 7.7, 8.2, 8.14, 9.3,1 2.7. AAW Main Series, XLI/136. J. Kirk, *Biographies of English Catholics in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1909, 243. Williams, *Bath and Rome*, 42,49,50

18 Lille 18 H 64, 1778 18 Mar, 22 May, 4 Oct, 1779 7 April, 14 Oct, 1780 30 April, Walmesley to Walker. Clifton 1772-80 vol.,1778 3 July, Walmesley to clergy of Western District. G. Scott, "The Times are Fast Approaching": Bishop Charles Walmesley O.S.B. [1722-1797} as Prophet', in The *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36,4, Oct. 1985, 590-604.

19 Lille 18 H 64, 1778 4 Oct., 6 Dec., 1779 14 Oct., 1780 30 April, Walmesley to Walker. Clifton 1772-88 vol, 1779 24 Nov., Walmesley to Sharrock. Rome, English College, 50.8.14,50.9.6. 1780 2 Jan., Walmesley to Sharrock

20 Williams, Bath and Rome, 50-51, 'my paper ...and other things burnt by rioters in Bath, June 9th 1780'; pp.54, 97-8, for list of his books and effects, dated 10 January 1781. Clifton, 1772-88 vol., 1780 12 June, Walmesley's Pastoral Letter, recommending prayers in 'the alarms of the present time'. Allanson, 'History' II, 264.

21 C. Wilson to G. Scott, 12 May 1997 '... From the two pieces by Walmesley that I have read, I have concluded that he is one of the Newtonian loyalists, Britons almost all, who believed that Newton had the right key to every problem he dealt with in the Principia. Newton indeed unlocked many of these problems; but he did not have the right key either for the problem of the motion of the Moon's apse or for the derivation of the precession of the equinoxes and nutation. So a number among his followers, Walmesley among them, invested time and thought in endeavors that would prove not to be helpful to the advance of the subject... At the same time it is clear that Walmesley is intelligent, and skilled in algebra and the calculus... Walmesley is in communication with mathematical astronomers who are in the mainstream of the 18th-century development, but I don't think he is one of them. Euler and d'Alembert and Lagrange and Laplace do not cite his results.'

22 C. Walmesley, *Analyse de Mesures, des Rapports et des Angles; on Reduction des Integrates aitx Logarithmes et aux Arx de Cercle*, Paris 1749. DNB, vol. xviii, 1223, for Stewart and Walmesley. Woolhampton, Douai Abbey, For bound MS volumes of papers given to the Society of St Edmund. Walmesley's contributions were, 'On the Propagation of Light', 17 June 1749; 'On the Rising of Vapours', 2 Dec. 1749; 'De Motu Corporum ad centrum duplex gravitantium', 10 March, 10 &16 June 1750; 'On the Nodes of the Moon's Orbit', 14 July, 22 Sept. 1750; 'On the Inclination of the Moon's sphere towards ! the plane of an Eclipse', 29 July 1750; 'Regarding other inequalities in the Moon's Orbit', 1 Dec. 1750; 'Regarding the Equation of the Middle Movement of the Moon', 15 Dec. 1750. 9 March 1751; 'Dissertation upon the Principle of Action in Beasts', 25 May 1751; 'Methodus Investigandi Logathrithmos Numeri or On Finding the Logarithms of any number', 25 April 1752; 'De Lineis Tertii Ordinis', 1 August 1752; 'De Methodo Differentiarum et De Summatione Serierum; 'De Praecessione Aequinoxium et Axis Terrae Nutatione', 28 May 1755; 'De Inaequalitatibus Motum Terrae', 27 June 1755. Woolhampton c. Nov. 1791,' Catalogue of the Library of the Society of St Edmund'. Parker Papers, c. Nov. 1792, 'Declaration of St Edmund's Property', for description of the Society's library, which contained copies of Walmesley's published works. A. Bellenger, '"Superstitious enemies of the flesh"? The Variety of Benedictine Responses to the Enlightenment', in Religious Change in Europe 1650-1914. *Essays for John McManners*, ed. Nigel Aston, Oxford 1997, pp. 155-8, and Scott, *Gothic Rage*, 156-8.

23 See Nelson supra, 'Charles Walmesley', pp.37-42, 49-51, for the most recent account of Walmesley's scientific interests and his contribution to the introduction of the Calendar. For Hay, see M. Goldie, 'The Scottish Catholic Enlightenment', *Journal of British Studies*, xxx, 1991, pp. 20-62, and his 'Common Sense philosophy and Catholic theology in the Scottish Enlightenment', in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 302 (1992), pp. 281-320. Walmesley is not mentioned in the Journals which report on the Parliamentary Committee on the reform of the Calendar, and DNB's reference that he was 'consulted by the British Government' clearly suggests something quite informal. Ushaw College Archives, Brooms' Diary of Fr. T. Smith [1778-1811], The Newcastle *Courant* quoted as stating Walmesley was 'the last survivor of the eminent mathematicians who were consulted and calculated the alteration from the old to the new style'. Downside, Birt Box 6, A 334, for Walmesley's Berlin Diploma [5 February 1750], although Butler [Memoirs, iv, 434] says that he modestly declined the honour. For scientific societies, see J. E. McClellan III, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 1985. In *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 49, Part II, pp. 700-58,1756, are to be found in Latin, 'Essay on the precession of the equinoxes and the nutation of the earth's axis', dedicated to James Bradley, and 'Of the irregularities that may be occasioned in the annual motion of the earth by the actions of Jupiter and Saturn', vol. 50, pp. 809ff, 1758, 'Of the irregularities of the motion of a satellite arising from the spheroidical figure of its primary planet', and vol. 52, pp.275ff, 1761, 'Of the irregularities in the planetary motions, caused by the mutual attraction of the planets'. The archives of the Royal Society holds the manuscripts of these.

24 Cambridge U. L copy of *The theory of the motion* contains copious MS additions by W. Smith of Irthlingborough. D. Carpanetto and G. Ricuperati, Italy in the Age of Reason, London 1987, 132, 262. E. W. Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies 1690-1800*, Chicago 1961. H. Gross, *Rome in the Age of Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1990, 242, 256. Clifton, 1772-88 vol.,1788 12 July, Waters to Walmesley, 'your friend Jerequiner [i.e. Jacquier] is dead and buried at his convent on Trinity Hill'; 1789-90 vol., 1789 19 Dec, 'your friend is Jacquier long dead'. Nelson, 'Charles Walmesley', 42.

25 *Orthodox Journal*, February 1819, pp. 65-66. Clifton 1772-88 vol., 1784 13 March, Waters to Walmesley, 'I am glad you have seen Sir William Hamilton's Acts of Calabria I thought you would them curious... The Acct. of an earthquake at Douay seems so triffling when compared with these', [This must have been Hamilton's, *An Account of the Earthquakes in Calabria, Sicily*...,Colchester 1783]; Clifton 1772-88 vol., 1786 2, 16 Dec., [description of eruption of Vesuvius]. For Hamilton, see I. Jenkins and K. Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes. Sir William Hamilton and His Collection*, London 1996.

26 C Butler, *Historical Memoirs*, iv, 434-5. J. C. Fowler, *The Benedictines in Bath during a Thousand Years*, Yeovil 1895, 79. Clifton, 1772-88 vol., 1784 28 Sept., Walmesley to Canvane. Woolhampton, Douai Abbey, St Edmund's, Paris: Accounts, entry for 24 April 1781 [Frisi]. Walmesley's books on Hamilton are at Woolhampton.

27 Clifton, 1772-88 vol., 1788 12 July, Waters to Walmesley, regarding Lunard's balloon; 1789-90 vol., 1790 27 March, Pembridge to Walmesley. This telescope was the subject of the print by J. N. Richards, depicting Herschel showing George III the telescope at Windsor in 1782 [Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 782.0.14.di.].. For Herschel, see Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *The Manuscript Papers of British Scientists* 1600-1940, London 1982, 44.; E. C. Davey, *Notable Catholics who lived and died at Bath between 1678 and 1823*, London, n.d,. *Downside Review*, vol. vi, 1887, 131, for paper on comet.