

SCENES OF CLERICAL LIFE IN GEORGIAN HAMPSHIRE: THE REVEREND RICHARD WAVELL

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ABSTRACT

The Reverend Richard Wavell was rector of St. Maurice, Winchester, from 1741 until his death in 1779, and also rector of nearby Chilcomb from 1750/51. Between 1744 and 1778, he corresponded with his friend, Thomas Woolls, vicar of Fareham from 1739 to 1789. Seventy-six of his letters have survived and the photocopies of them in the Hampshire Record Office form the basis of this essay.

Like James Woodforde's famous diary, Wavell's letters provide us with a many-sided, absorbing picture of a clerical career in the provinces, where mundane life ticked on largely oblivious of the high affairs of state and great events.

In the popular mind, the embodiment of the eighteenth-century Church of England is probably James Woodforde, rector of Weston Longeville in Norfolk from 1774 to 1803. Woodforde's diary, kept between 1758 and 1802 (Woodforde 1968), provides us with a detailed account of a village parson's work and a marvellous picture of humdrum, everyday life in provincial England. From it, we learn of Woodforde's ministry, his relations with the local squire, his dealings with the poor, and his treatment of his servants and animals. The diary describes the Parson's journeys to London, Bath, and Oxford, his trips to the theatre, and minor ailments. And then there is Woodforde's delight in the gross quantities of food and drink which he so dutifully recorded:

We had for Dinner to day a boiled Leg of Mutton with Capers, a Couple of Chicken roasted and a Tongue, a Norfolk plain batter Pudding, Tripe, Tarts and some blamange with 4 Sorts of Cheese. For Supper some Oysters, a wild Duck roasted, Potatoes roasted, and some cold Chicken &c. After Coffee and Tea (Woodforde 1968, II, 358) ...

Woodforde's diary is a natural starting-point for a discussion of the Hanoverian Church: indeed, in his magisterial *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century*, Norman Sykes, dean of Winchester from 1958 to 1961, saw Woodforde as, in popular estimation, 'representative of the country clergy' of his day (Sykes 1934, 270). Such a statement raises a number of questions about the condition of the Established Church in Georgian times. For if Woodforde, keeping the noiseless tenor of his way in his remote backwater, seems a decent and affable individual, his piety, whilst firm, appears limited and uninspiring (at least judging by the selections of the diary's twentieth-century editor). And was not Woodforde one of the better clergymen who enjoyed the life which Edward Gibbon, the historian of the Roman empire, derided as 'the fat slumbers of the church' (Gibbon 1978, 163)? The Georgian Church is frequently portrayed in a repellent light. Between the great days of the Caroline divines and the Oxford Movement, parsons are often perceived as grasping, selfish, and worldly, caring more for their tithes than their congregations and enhancing their incomes through the practice of pluralism. When pluralism produced non-residence, was not a parish's worship neglected, or entrusted to an inadequate, impoverished curate? The Established Church is presented as the handmaiden of a state which treated the lower orders harshly, whilst its gouty, gross clergy, bigoted and port-soaked, are seen as apologists for an unjust *status quo* and toadies to the rich (Malcolmson 1981, 85; Thompson 1991, 32). Small wonder that the zealous Methodists eventually broke with the Anglican body.

This hostile picture does not derive merely from the period's jaundiced sceptics, vicious car-

toons, and angry radicals, and from smug Victorian writers who anachronistically condemned the Georgian Church because it failed to conform to their standards and values. The accusations are reiterated in the works of modern scholars (e.g. Virgin 1989). Other recent historians have, however, countered the charges, and have presented, both in national surveys (e.g. Taylor 1987) and local studies (e.g. Barrie-Curien 1993), a more favourable picture of the Hanoverian parsons, maintaining that their achievements were far from negligible, especially since in their lifetimes the Church encountered new and serious problems. As attendance at services was, from 1689, legally unenforceable (Bennett 1975, 11–12), clergymen worked hard to maintain, or to swell, their congregations. New church buildings were erected or old ones extended. Efforts were made to ensure that parishioners properly understood Christian doctrine through catechizing and careful, intelligible preaching. Taken together, in the eyes of ‘revisionists’, such endeavours constitute an ‘eighteenth-century Reformation’ in England (Gregory 1993; Gregory 1998), aimed at bringing the Protestant message with increasing effectiveness to the lower orders.

In line with this general debate, historians have investigated the Church of England’s functioning in Hampshire during the Georgian period. For the left-wing writer E.P. Thompson, the Winchester diocese was, in the early eighteenth century, a baneful institution, whose greedy officials exploited the tenants on its lands and displayed a hard-hearted disregard for the lower orders’ welfare (Thompson 1977, *passim*). Professor W.R. Ward, using the answers to episcopal visitation enquiries from 1725, 1765, and 1788, also produces a gloomy picture of the Church in Hampshire (Ward 1995, ix–xxxvi). Pluralism and non-residence were rife, parochial schooling was unimpressive, and the administration of charity often flawed (Ward 1995, xi–xii, xviii–xxi, xxviii–xxx). Yet, by contrast, Dr. R.K. Pugh has argued that the Winchester diocese was in a satisfactory state when Benjamin Hoadly was bishop (1734–61). Despite Hoadly’s reputation as a political appointee, self-seeking and negligent, Pugh contends that the diocese’s administration operated smoothly during his episcopate (Pugh 1985).

Dr. William Gibson, too, has seen much to commend in the Hampshire clergy’s endeavours in Hanoverian times – when focusing, for example, on the parish of St. Mary, Southampton, he maintains that its clerics served their flocks effectively (Gibson 1998–99). Unfortunately, however, the lower clergy, when they appear in these four studies, largely seem faceless men, lacking – for better or worse – the human attributes of a Woodforde. Given the authors’ preoccupations or broad analytical sweep, and the space at their disposal, this was unavoidable.

This essay adopts a narrower perspective, looking at the world of one Winchester parson in the Hanoverian period. It is possible to do this because, a few years ago, a gift was made to the Hampshire Record Office by Mr. Douglas Pearson. Mr. Pearson, who lives in New South Wales, Australia, is a descendant of the Reverend Thomas Woolls, an eighteenth-century Hampshire clergyman, and the material he deposited is a set of photocopies of letters to his ancestor from the Reverend Richard Wavell, another Hampshire cleric and the subject of this piece (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 1–118). One reason for the correspondence, which covers over thirty years (1744–78), was that the two men used to swap sermons (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 2, 7, 11, 33, 39, 90, 105) in a way somewhat reminiscent of the regular exchange of telegraphic confessions and absolutions contemplated by two priests, old friends, in Gabriel Chevallier’s novel *Clochemerle*. A novelist whom Wavell liked was Fielding (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 48). And like Fielding’s books, Wavell’s letters give a humane, vivid, and absorbing account of life in Georgian England.

Richard Wavell was born in 1717 (H.R.O. 21M65/E1/4/192). The Wavells were prominent citizens of Winchester. Thomas Wavell, a linen draper, had been a leading Whig under Charles II and James II, and had opposed the Crown’s politically contentious schemes for remodelling the city’s charter. With the end of King James’s reign and the Glorious Revolution, therefore, Thomas was raised high, becoming mayor (Carpenter Turner 1992, 103–4; Coleby 1987, 175–7); and other members of the family assumed the office in the eighteenth century. Richard’s father, Daniel, was rector of the ancient church of St. Maurice,

Winchester (which was rebuilt in 1842, but demolished, apart from the tower, in the twentieth century) (Carpenter Turner 1992, 127–8; James 1997, 110; Surry 1984). Richard, then, was brought up in a comfortable, educated, religious household, and, in 1736, he matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford; Thomas Woolls had preceded him there in 1733 (Foster 1888, IV, 1,608, 1,514).

Woolls's period of residence was an interesting time at Pembroke: the College was, said Samuel Johnson, its most famous son, 'a nest of singing birds' (Boswell 1980, 55). Johnson had left in December 1729, but, in 1732, 'the triumvirate' of Richard Graves, Anthony Whistler, and William Shenstone matriculated. The first was to find fame as a novelist, the last as a poet (Fairer 1986, 786–7). George Whitefield, destined to become the founder of Calvinistic Methodism, also entered Pembroke in 1732, as a servitor. Graves described the variety of social groupings at the College. There was 'a very sober little party, who amused themselves in the evening with reading Greek and drinking water' (Quiller Couch 1892, 97) and 'a set of jolly, sprightly young fellows ... who drank ale, smoked tobacco, punned, and sung bacchanalian catches the whole evening' (Quiller Couch 1892, 97–8). There were, too, "bucks of the first head", who enjoyed 'port-wine and arrack-punch; and now and then ... would conclude with a bottle or two of claret. They kept late hours, [and] drank their favourite toasts on their knees ...' Lastly, there was 'a sort of flying squadron of plain, sensible, matter-of-fact men, confined to no club, but associating occasionally with each party' (Quiller Couch 1892, 98). No doubt Woolls and Wavell found their own *milieu*.

The two young men determined to take holy orders on completing their studies at Oxford, and the Master and Fellows of Pembroke duly testified that Wavell 'hath behav'd in a Sober and Regular manr. ... And that as far as we are Judges he is fit to be promoted to the Sacred Order of Deacon' (H.R.O. 21M65/E1/4/192). (It may be significant, however, that his testimonial does not contain the wording included in Woolls's – that he had 'Apply'd himself with Diligence to his propr. Studies' [H.R.O. 21M65/E1/4/127].) Woolls was vicar of Fareham from 1739 to 1789, when he died (Ward 1995, 184); he is commemorated in

the church of St. Peter and St. Paul by a memorial tablet (1790), the work of Richard Westmacott (Pevsner and Lloyd 1967, 220). In 1740, Wavell was appointed curate of Headbourne Worthy, a short distance from Winchester, and, the following year, he became rector of St. Maurice (his father had died in 1738). He held the living until his own death in 1779 (H.R.O. 21M65/E1/4/192; Carpenter Turner 1992, 128; Ward 1995, 235). From 1750/51, he also held the incumbency of Chilcomb, a rural parish just outside the city (Ward 1995, 173), and, in 1773, he was made master of the Hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, Winchester (*V.C.H.* II, 200; Carpenter Turner 1992, 128). The livings of St. Maurice and Chilcomb were both in the bishop of Winchester's gift and, in 1745, *The Clergyman's Intelligencer*, using the King's Books, valued them, respectively, at £13 7s. 6d. and £8 6s. 8d. *per annum* (*Clergyman's Intelligencer* 1745, 219). If the figures had been up-to-date, and this was all Wavell derived from his livings, his stipend would plainly have been unsatisfactory: in the 1730s, benefices worth £50 or less *per annum* were classified as poor (Walsh and Taylor 1993, 6). But the figures were out-of-date. For St. Maurice, it was noted, in 1725, that the parish charities included 'a pension of £25 p.a. to the rector and £6 2s. p.a. from the Crown; [and] 20s. to him yearly for preaching a sermon before the mayor and aldermen on All Saints Day' (Ward 1995, 147). And, in 1750, Wavell reckoned the income from Chilcomb at about £80 a year (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 34).

Woolls and Wavell both led inconspicuous lives. Judging by the British Library's catalogue, Woolls never published anything. The sole piece in print that Wavell certainly produced was a short dissertation on prophecy. He had long been interested in the subject (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 37–8), though the essay was published only after his death in *Thoughts on the Nature of the Grand Apostacy* (1781), a book – which Gibbon scathingly dismissed (Gibbon 1978, 186, n. 1) – by the Reverend Henry Taylor, rector of Crawley in Hampshire. However, it is very likely that Wavell was also the author of an anonymous, two-volume history of Winchester of 1773 (*V.C.H.* II, 199–200, n. 3; Carpenter Turner 1992, 128). Both the posthumous essay and the probable anonymous work

proclaim Wavell's retiring character. Neither he, nor Woolls, wanted to attract notice or win promotion through writing. Indeed, the letters contain gratifyingly few passages indicating ambition and a desire for advancement on the part of the two clerics. Wavell seems to have been more than content with his lot – though he was plainly delighted when he was able to combine the living of St. Maurice with that of Chilcomb (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 34). Woolls was perhaps less happy in Fareham. He did solicit preferment in 1760, and his friend waited on the Chancellor of the Winchester diocese with his letter. Wavell told the Chancellor that Woolls 'preached twice every Sunday & had a large Parish to take Care of'. The Chancellor replied, rather dryly, 'He was glad yt. so large a Parish had so good a Man upon it' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 84)! Nothing came of the request, and, apart from this episode, a passage about advancement which is most easily read as ironic banter (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 100), and gossip about the preferment of others, there is very little to suggest in the letters that the two men had much interest in the machinery of patronage (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 83, 84).

Wavell took his clerical duties seriously, acting as a caring Christian pastor. The parish of St. Maurice had earlier been combined with those of St. Mary Kalendar and St. Peter Colebrook, so that there was 'one church [St. Maurice's] only for the 3 parishes' (Ward 1995, 147). Situated in the cramped centre of the city, the compass of the parishes was small ('about 1 mile') (Ward 1995, 147). In 1725, the Rector reckoned his flock numbered 1,193 (Ward 1995, 147). Wavell held two services on Sundays – as deemed necessary by the Church's canons of 1604 – and ensured that the 'sacrament is administered so often in each year that every parishioner may receive the communion three times' in accordance with Anglican teaching. He resided in the parsonage (Ward 1995, 235). Respecting his pluralism, Wavell aimed to officiate personally about once a month at Chilcomb (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 37), with some thirty parishioners (Ward 1995, 37), and employed a curate, who lived in Winchester. Only one service was performed on Sunday – this was, it seems, customary there – but, again, the eucharist was celebrated sufficiently often to per-

mit each parishioner to communicate three times annually (Ward 1995, 173).

Wavell's kindness and humanity shine out of the letters. He disapproved of the harsh eighteenth-century penal code (Gatrell 1994; Hay 1977; Thompson 1977): 'the multiplying capital Punishments so unnecessarily must reflect great Dishonor on our *mild* Government' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 61). He was not anxious to become a magistrate. He was also kind to animals. After recalling an instance of cruelty to a cat, he observed that the 'Brute Creation ... ought to be treated as Beings capable of Happiness or Misery' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 47). He seems to have been genuinely modest (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 2, 67); 'Upon casting my Eye back upon my Letter', he once stated, 'I am asham'd to see so many I's', regarding this as a symptom of egotism (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 53). Charitable giving was another of his virtues – in one instance he gave away money anonymously (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 99). And he liked the peace of his home. Having been away from Winchester, he wrote to Woolls in 1750, 'I am once more in my own great Chair ... and am in a State of Tranquillity, for which I am very thankful, and which I relish mightily' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 35). This gentle nature was, though, enlivened by a keen sense of humour and an eye for the absurd. Some of the letters are gossipy. In 1751, he declared:

I have borrowed Dobson's Milton, and have red some of it. 'Tis a surprizing Work, excellent indeed! The Author is as surprizing as his Work. They tell Me He hath married a fat old Woman with a Beard without a farthing of Money, or a Tooth in her Head, and is gone into Orders ... This it is to be a Poet! (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 42).

When Woolls did not take his wig home, Wavell wrote a response from the wig to its 'Master' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 1). And in 1756, when a French invasion seemed a possibility, he rejoiced in his recovery from illness since 'now, shd. the French come, I can run away like an Englishman' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 70). Sadly, the letters reveal very little about Woolls's personality, though Wavell seems to have seen him as an almost saintly man, holding him in the highest regard (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 46).

Richard Wavell clearly valued his family and his circle of friends very highly. For a time at least, his mother and sister probably lived in his house (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 57). He prized Woolls's friendship and was very anxious to receive replies to his letters (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 57). He saw letter-writing as 'conversing with my Friends' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 12), though he was also solicitous in inviting Woolls to visit him in Winchester (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 50, 75, 83): 'Whether you are ill or well, small or great, whether you come in Summer or in Winter, You will be always welcome' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 54). The endings of the letters are affectionate, and, in 1761, he wrote, it 'will give me great pleasure at all times to hear of ye. Happiness of ... [your family], as well as of yourself. I shall never be unconcerned at any thing wc. may befall yse. whose Welfare you have at Heart' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 100). Still, despite the warmth of his personality, Wavell was wary about getting married. 'I am a little afraid of Matrimony', he told Woolls, who seems to have been happily married, 'for the same Reason that most People fear Death, because Heaven or Hell ... must be the Consequence of it' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 48). Elsewhere he displays a rather cynical view of marriage. Woolls had advocated that every man should have 'a Window to his Breast', so his true thoughts could be seen. Wavell protested at this 'very wicked Wish', on, among other grounds, family peace: 'I can't think it wd. much promote That for the Wife to see it written on her Dear's Heart, (which might possibly be the Case,) that she was a d-mn'd B-ch, or ye. Husband on her's that he was a sorry Dog.' 'There is Nothing more for the Good of Mankind than Dissimulation', he added (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 46).

Despite his humour, Wavell could not escape depressing concerns born of the cruel, disease-ridden environment of the eighteenth century. As early as 1745, he was suffering from gout (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 2). In 1748, he complained about the swelling of one foot: 'I wd. always have my Feet upon an equal Footing, But of late my Left Foot became a very great Man, Nothing wd. satisfy him but he must be upon a Cushion with, I don't know, how much Flannel about him ...' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 16). He suffered other at-

tacks in 1756 and 1760 (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 67, 70, 90). He took exercise and believed that riding in 'the pure Air upon our Downs' was good for his health - 'Let an Horse be your Doctor, and you will hardly want any other', he told his friend (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 50, 53, 98). One acquaintance suffered the dangerous and agonizing surgery of cutting for the stone (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 17), whilst physicians might be expensive (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 55). Although Wavell usually joked about his own indispositions, he was often anxious about Woolls's health, which seems to have been indifferent (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 23, 28, 50, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60). And the precarious tenor of life is sharply revealed in two letters of 1761. In the first, dated 1 February, he wrote: 'I am glad yr. son Jack hath ye. small Pox in such a favourable manner' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 99). But in the next - dated 18 February - he began, 'I hope by this time your Fears for your Son are happily over' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 100): seemingly, there had been a sharp turn for the worse. (In fact, John Woolls survived and followed in his father's footsteps. He attended Pembroke College, Oxford, was ordained, and was vicar of Fareham from 1790 to 1811 [Foster 1888, IV, 1,608].) Wavell's belief in the afterlife was a great comfort when he thought about death. When one individual died, he observed that he 'has got rid of a very troublesom Body; I hope He will appear in a better hereafter' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 83).

Lack of veterinary expertise, as well as the lack of sophisticated medicine for humans, could also cause problems. In February 1760, Wavell would have liked to have gone to Fareham but was unable to do so because both his horses were sick (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 83). He left Winchester at various points - to visit a friend near Newbury, to take his M.A. at Oxford, and to go to London (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 35-6, 43) - but he also enjoyed a good social life in the city and its immediate surroundings. We have seen him riding for exercise, and he was an enthusiastic hunter too. 'I rode out on Monday Morn. intending to be at home time enough to have written to you', he wrote to Woolls in 1755, but 'ye. Hounds were running, in full Cry, & I galloped after ym. &, to tell you ye. Truth, forgot you & almost forgot

my-self (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 64). 'I am perpetually galloping a hunting', he noted in 1761 (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 100). In Winchester, there was a range of social amenities (Rosen 1981; Cooper 1999), and, at the time of the assizes, he might attend the assize sermon (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 31). He enjoyed having guests (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 50, 75, 83, 91). The letters also mention a ball and cards (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 83, 90). One might meet friends at the assembly rooms – though the people who gathered there could, according to Wavell, be somewhat particular about the company they admitted. In 1747, he claimed that 'divers French Gentlemen' had asked to meet a group of English ladies at a social gathering, but the request was refused since it was decided 'that the Ladies of Great Britain were not to be made a sight of to Paltry French-men!' This resolution, Wavell declared, 'should be kept in the City Chest, as an everlasting monument' to these women and he composed a poem on the matter (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 5–6).

Besides the assembly rooms, cards, and balls, there were other, less sophisticated, recreations in Winchester. In September 1759, Wavell told his friend there was a puppet show in town (some militia officers apparently attacked Punch, but he put them to flight – they had, it was said, been rude to his wife!) (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 81). In the same letter, Wavell also gave an account of the 'Harangue' of an 'Auctioneer' at St. Giles's Hill Fair, which is worth quoting:

'Thirteen Pence, Gentlemen, for this *Commentary* on the N. Testament: It is worth, Gentlemen, more than as many Shillings.' He opens the Book and looks in it. 'Here', says He, 'Gentlemen, Our Savior is called a Lamb; in other Parts of ye. Scripture He is said to be God. Can the same Person, (Gentlen.) be a Lamb and yet God too? You have this Mystery explain'd in this Book.' The People seem'd very desirous of knowing How This cd. be, and ye. Book went off at a good Price.

The next book was, Wavell thought, 'Dalton's Country Justice'. Here the rogue declared: 'Perhaps ... You may "chance some of you (Gentn.) to get a pretty Girl with Child; And if you shd. This Book wd. tell you how to get out of it."' This

tome, Wavell thought, sold better than any other whilst he was present! A third work produced by this 'perfect Master of the Art of persuading' was a question-and-answer book which he 'wickedly ... [claimed] wd. make ... Children wiser than the Parson of the Parish'. 'His Books went off and His Pockets fill'd apace.' Wavell listened to the man for more than half an hour (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 80–1). Perhaps he was simply amused by his patter. But perhaps he also hoped to pick up tips and learn new ways of enlivening his sermons and holding the congregation's attention.

Politics sometimes intruded into the tranquil lives of Wavell and Woolls. With respect to the royal succession, the burning issue of the first half of the century, both men were loyal Hanoverians and anti-Jacobite. When in 1745, the year of Charles Edward Stuart's rebellion, a new tenor bell was installed in St. Peter and St. Paul, Fareham, a loyalist poem was inscribed on it (*V.C.H.* III, 215), whilst Wavell decided to preach against Popery in order to whip up anti-Jacobite feeling (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 116). He enjoyed Fielding's virulent *Jacobite's Journal* (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 12), and deplored the overt support in his old university for the Pretender. In 1748, after some drunken, pro-Stuart undergraduates had rioted (Clark 1985, 155; Langford 1986, 120–1), he wrote:

Our Alma Mater ... in one of her Fits ... fell a raving, cursing the K-, and was mighty fond of the Scarlet-Whore, quite in Love with a young Cardinal [James III's son, Henry]: Surely the old Lady is in her Dotage: It is no Wonder: she is, (is not she?) near a 1000 years of Age ... I wish somebody wd. give her a Rattle, somewhat to quiet her; She ought to be kept within doors ... (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 12).

Other political matters are briefly mentioned in the letters. Though he wanted no persecution, Wavell approved of the repeal – following popular agitation – of the Act of 1753 authorizing Parliament to naturalize individual Jews (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 57). He noted the unpopularity of Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, which outlawed clandestine marriages (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 61). The next year, Woolls was apprehensive

of the possibility of war (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 59). When hostilities began in 1756, Wavell recorded how Hessian (mercenary) soldiers were stationed near Winchester: 'they will make us remember them as long as we live. They throw Stones & Dirt at our People, if they go to their Camp, & cry, *'Winchester man, no good'* (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 67, 69). (Another clerical commentator in Winchester, Edmund Pyle, however, wrote of their superb discipline [Hartshorne 1905, 265].) Other letters mention the Duke of Newcastle, George II's death, the militia, and the nature of contemporary parliamentary representation (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 69–70, 93).

As Wavell himself said, he was a parson, not a politician (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 59). His religion was at one with his kindly, simple character. 'How can an ill-natur'd Man be a Xtian?', he once asked (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 58). He seems to have treated humble people gently. 'A Country Fellow ... put to me a Case of Conscience', he recounted – whether "it was a Sin to eat Flesh on Ash-Wednesday". The Parson thought he was playing the fool, but the man went on that he 'was over-persuaded, & had eaten Meat last Ash-Wednesday, & had not been easy ever since'. Wavell replied that 'if That was the worst Action He ever did, He was a very good Man', admitting to Woolls he had 'been a Sinner in the same Way ... [and therefore] was a very favourable Judge in the Case' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 75). Ornate decorating of churches was not to his taste (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 101–2). He was not always sure what his congregation thought of a sermon (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 37), which, no doubt, made composition difficult, but he was discerning about the preaching of others. Whilst he was in London in 1750, he heard the evangelical William Romaine preach (*D.N.B.*, 'Romaine'). He criticized the content of the sermon quite vigorously, but, he admitted, Romaine 'spake with a Voice, clear, distinct, and so musical, that I cd. have heard him with Pleasure ever so long ... [Had] an Angel fro. Heaven preach'd He cd. not have been heard with greater Attention' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 35). Naturally, the correspondence with Woolls contains much mention or discussion of theological questions: the respective punishment of great

and lesser sinners in the afterlife (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 22–3); the workings of God's hand on earth and general and particular providences (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 27–8); miracles (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 25, 100); and prophecy, the subject of Wavell's posthumously-published essay (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 37–8, 57, 94, 95–6, 98, 99, 100). Certain of the letters deal with death – for Wavell, 'an Happiness yet to come' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 23, 83, 85).

For a modern reader, one unattractive feature of the letters is Wavell's dislike of Catholicism, the unorthodox, and sceptics (he was rather ambivalent about Protestant Dissenters) (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 15, 17, 41, 43, 118). One must view this in the context of the age, however: for Wavell, this was merely the corollary of his sincere belief in, and commitment to, Anglican doctrine. He was sure that, in Revelation, 'the Abominations, Cruelty, Idolatry &c. of Papal Rome ... are predicted by St. John' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 95), whilst, in 1760, he thought that, if Britain withdrew from the Seven Years' War, the Catholics would put an end to the Protestant religion in the German lands (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 94). Given the weakness of English Catholicism, it is unsurprising that he seems to have feared free-thinkers and atheists more. He was worried that men with unorthodox views had infiltrated the Church of England (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 42, 52, 68), and that some clergymen did not truly believe in her tenets. In the context of Woolls's 'Window to ... [the] Breast', he observed: 'What Service wd. it do the Congregation wn. a Divine was most eloquently displaying the Joys of Heaven, or describing the Torments of Hell, to see thro' that cursed Window that this Revd. Orator did not believe one Word of the Matter?' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 46). Heretics were very dangerous and were frequently long-lived – 'Mr. Satan suffers his decoy ducks to stay here a good while; He knows his own Interest too well, to run away with his best Friends, whilst yy. can do his Business' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 68). In disputes with atheists, no quarter could be given: it 'is right to take all possible Ways to hinder such a dangerous Animal as an Atheist from making his Escape' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 43).

Wavell's views on politics and religion were not

those of an ignorant man. On the contrary, he was learned and civilized, and a voracious reader. He studied the works of modern theologians – Abernethy, Arthur Ashley Sykes, and Warburton (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 41, 50, 99). He also perused the writings of the quasi-free-thinking theologian Conyers Middleton, and was disturbed by reports relating to Viscount Bolingbroke's posthumous pieces (they revealed he was a deist, despite his posturings as a champion of the Church of England) (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 4, 37, 50, 52). He loved the classics and the letters contain snippets of Greek and Latin. He immersed himself in Homer, Cooper's life of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius; he wrote some papers (partly in Latin) on Plato's proofs of the immortality of the soul and had a very high opinion of Cicero, who wrote 'the purest Latin that ever was written' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 16, 25, 28, 40, 48, 52–3, 56, 58, 60–1, 77, 118). He read, too, modern authors, other than the pure theologians noted above and Middleton: Milton (the Latin works), Lord Shaftesbury, Locke (the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*), Burnet, Grove (on moral philosophy), and Robertson (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 23, 32, 33, 43, 48, 81). And, on a lighter note, there was Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Pompey the Little*, the satirical adventures of a Bologna lap-dog by Francis Coventry (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 48). Wavell was plainly a discriminating reader: the letters contain sensible criticism of various books' contents. He was also appreciative of an attractive style. After reading *Letters on Several Subjects* by Sir Thomas Fitzosborne (i.e. William Melmoth the Younger), he commented, his 'Stile is very beautiful, and exact'. And he added: 'His Criticisms [are] just, and his Sentiments, generally speaking, fall in with mine: i.e. they are true' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 24). He went on to observe, however, that 'the stile is more proper for an Essay than a Letter: it is too accurate for the Latter: An Epistolary stile shd. be more familiar, and have a greater Air of Carelessness than appears in these Letters' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 24).

If Wavell was a connoisseur of books, he was also a connoisseur of pipes. In 1747, he asked Woolls to send him two gross of pipes of medium size (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 6). In 1760, he

wanted three gross from the man 'whose Wife hath a most incomprehensible fluency of Speech' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 91). When they arrived, he was delighted with them: 'Wn. I go to Fareham, I will kiss yt. old talking Woman ye. Pipe-maker's Wife. These are ye. best Pipes I ever had in my Life' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 97). He clearly found smoking relaxing, and enjoyed taking a pipe with his friends (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 15).

It might perhaps be objected that this essay has been too generous to Wavell. A prosecuting counsel could well ask some hard questions. Did not Wavell 'do the duty' and very little more? Would he not have been better employed in composing more sermons than in penning letters to Woolls – and, no doubt, to other friends too? Did not his recreations occupy time that should have been spent on good works? The heroine of *H.M.S. Pinafore* observes of the First Lord of the Admiralty, 'I know that he is a truly great and good man, for he told me so himself.' Are not Wavell's own letters bound to show him in a highly flattering light?

In answer to such questions, one must begin by noting that the principal source, the correspondence, is skewed: it tends not to deal with Wavell's routine work as a parson – which could be taken as read by Woolls – but, predictably, with more unusual, interesting news. This essay is skewed too: given its length and general character, one could not detail fully Wavell's theological preoccupations, though the letters reveal a mind saturated with matters of faith. Respecting Wavell's ministry there is one – only one – churchwardens' presentment which gives a glimpse of his parishioners' feelings: it comes from 1759, half way through his incumbency at St. Maurice. Asked whether the parson performed his duties, the churchwardens simply replied that 'all is well' (H.R.O. 21M65/B2/895): clearly they did not think that he needed to do more. Away from his cures, Wavell did not indulge only his leisure pursuits. In 1742, he became a governor of the Hampshire County Hospital, founded in 1736, and for years he served on its management committee, attending meetings, albeit somewhat irregularly, and in 1758–59 acting as assistant treasurer (H.R.O. 5M63/2 *passim*; Carpenter Turner 1986, 32, 42). Such work was an expression of practical

Christianity and was seen as such by contemporaries: Isaac Maddox, bishop of Worcester from 1743 to 1759, likewise worked tirelessly for the Worcester Infirmary (Salter 1962, 134–6) and his tomb in the cathedral has a relief of the Good Samaritan. Wavell was also one of Winchester's paving commissioners and sat on a sub-committee to supervise the paving (Carpenter Turner 1986, 42–3).

Wavell's practical Christianity and his kindness are shown in one further set of documents: his will and its codicils. He made many bequests and left Woolls £50 (H.R.O. 1779 B/49/2). Mindful, presumably, of his anxieties when composing sermons, he thoughtfully left his manuscript sermons to the Reverend Lancelot Kerby, vicar of St. Bartholomew Hyde, Winchester (H.R.O. 1779 B/49/3). In addition, he was very concerned to reward his servants and to protect them from hardship after his death. In the first codicil (1776), he left Abraham Craddock £40, Mary Stacey £50, and Mary Rogers £20 (H.R.O. 1779 B/49/2). In 1778, he directed that Craddock should receive a further £60 and Stacey a further £160 (H.R.O. 1779 B/49/4). The eighth codicil (1779) gave Craddock another £50 (H.R.O. 1779 B/49/6). But the most touching provision was made in the last few days of Wavell's life when he decided that the servants

shall have the Use of my Kitchen Washouse [*sic*] and Pantry, and the Furniture thereof and also two Garrets and three Beds for the Term of one Year after my Decease if they shall think proper and that they shall be maintained out of my personal Estate and Effects during that period (H.R.O. 1779 B/49/7).

It is moving, and was characteristic of the man, that, even at this juncture, he was thinking of others, and not merely about himself.

Richard Wavell's is an exceptionally agreeable and endearing voice from the past. Even so, some of this engaging man's letters are disconcerting – at least for the author of this essay. Given the writer's chief interest as a historian, he is not pleased to read:

I have been dabbling in Church History; Which of all things surely is the most tiresome and least

improving. I don't see what Purpose it answers to be well vers'd in such Kind of Matters, unless to make one almost hate the very Name of an Ecclesiastick: Which in a Lay Christian would be wicked ... (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 56).

Still, one must forgive him this since he might not have liked his private letters being used as the basis for a publication: in 1756, he wrote to Woolls, 'I use my Friends Letters, as I wish they wd. use mine: I generally destroy them: Things are sometimes dropp'd in Letters, wc. a Man wd. not be willing any Body shd. see but the Person to whom he writes' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 68). Nevertheless, one suspects he would have pardoned this intrusion into his private world. For it is, above all, Wavell's good nature and gentleness which shine out of the letters, and one remembers his preaching in St. Maurice, slightly uncertain of his congregation's response; his kind treatment of the anxious 'Country Fellow'; his conversation with friends 'over a Pipe and Bottle' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 58); and his contentment when 'sit[ting] down quietly and ... [smoking his] Pipe' (H.R.O. Photocopy 605, 34), in his great chair. Of course, one would like to know more about Wavell and, particularly, about his ministry. None the less, his letters to Woolls, and the other sources which complement them, show that, both as a man and a pastor, he was a credit to his Church. And we must be grateful to Mr. Pearson, whose gift has so valuably illuminated his career. What would be our view of the Hanoverian Church in Hampshire if we possessed like sources about the mass of Wavell's clerical colleagues, about whom we usually know so depressingly little?

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