

From the *Transactions* of the  
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

**Martin Benson, Bishop of Gloucester**

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2001, Vol. 119, 155-176

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## Martin Benson, Bishop of Gloucester

By JOHN FENDLEY

Martin Benson<sup>1</sup> was bishop of Gloucester from 1735 to 1752. He is remembered as a conscientious prelate living at a time when the Bench, as seen by posterity, had a low reputation. The domination of politics in the selection and promotion of bishops has left a picture of worldly men neglecting their proper responsibilities in a struggle for advancement. This description may fit several in the 18th century, but does no justice to those, some of them of the highest calibre, who were devoted to the Church and conscientiously carried out their duties as bishops. Benson was one of their number.

Benson was born on 23 April 1689 at Cradley in Herefordshire, where his father, John Benson, was rector. Benson came from a clerical family.<sup>2</sup> He was the great-grandson of Samuel Fell, a dean of Christ Church who was deprived of his preferments in 1649, and the great-nephew of John Fell, the reforming dean of Christ Church and later the bishop of Oxford, the subject of the epigram ‘I do not like thee, Dr. Fell . . .’. His paternal grandfather was George Benson, dean of Hereford. An uncle, Samuel Benson, canon and archdeacon of Hereford, was deprived of his offices as a non-juror in 1690.

Benson was, in his own words,<sup>3</sup> ‘educated in grammar learning’ at Charterhouse School, which was then in the suburbs of London on the site of the former Carthusian monastery. He was admitted to the foundation in 1703 at the nomination of Henry Compton, bishop of London. He remembered his school affectionately throughout his life. According to an 18th-century master of Charterhouse, Nicholas Mann, there was a time when he coveted the mastership of the foundation beyond all else.<sup>4</sup> Towards the end of his life he corresponded with the duke of Newcastle about ways and means by which a ‘poor lad’ might be nominated to the foundation.<sup>5</sup> In his will<sup>6</sup> he left £50 to ‘the Master and Officers of the Charter House where I had the blessing of receiving my education to be disposed of in any way as they shall judge most proper for the service of the scholars there’. The benefaction has found several uses, among them a book prize with a book-plate bearing Benson’s arms (Fig. 1).<sup>7</sup>

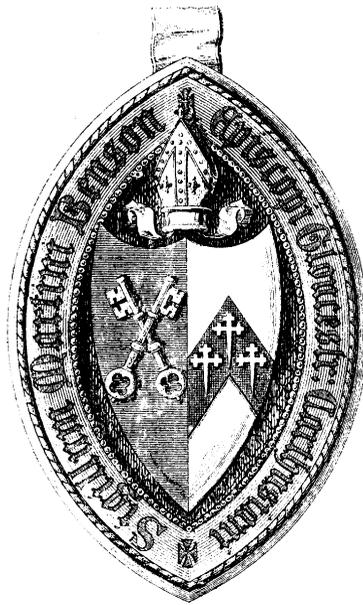
In 1706 Benson matriculated at Oxford from Christ Church, which he entered as a commoner. He received several exhibitions:<sup>8</sup> the Bostock, for those ‘of the towardliest hope for learning and education’, the Morris, for the encouragement the study of Hebrew, and the Fell, which was awarded by examination and was directed to ‘indigent and ingenious commoners’—by Benson’s time a description loosely interpreted. In 1712 he was elected a Student<sup>9</sup> of Christ Church on the nomination of Roger Altham, regius professor of Hebrew. He graduated B.A. in 1712 and M.A., after an unusually short interval, in the following year.<sup>10</sup> In 1714 he became lecturer in Greek and in 1715 lecturer in rhetoric, thus occupying the bottom rungs of the ladder of college officials responsible for undergraduate instruction. When Thomas Hearne heard him preach in the cathedral in 1715 he thought him ‘an ingenious, modest, good natured master of arts’.<sup>11</sup> In 1716 he gave the annual All Saints’ Day oration in memory of John Fell (for Benson also an act of family piety). Hearne went to dine at Christ Church to hear it and thought it very good.<sup>12</sup>

From 1714 to 1716 Benson was a tutor of Christ Church; one of ‘a body of well educated young men whose average age was about thirty, the majority coming from the middle ranks of society’<sup>13</sup> — a description that fitted Benson exactly. The relation of the 18th-century tutor to the pupil was described by a contemporary as ‘[to him] the care of your health, your morals, your economy, your learning, indeed all your interests in this place, are immediately assigned’.<sup>14</sup> So intimate an association could be of permanent value to the tutor, especially at Christ Church where nearly all the nobleman undergraduates in the university were entered. Three noblemen who were Benson’s pupils played a part in his life. The earliest, Theophilus Hastings, later 9th earl of Huntingdon, matriculated in 1712. He was to marry Selina, daughter of Earl Ferrers and founder of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, who brought Benson into rather turbulent contact with Methodism in its formative years.<sup>15</sup> Benson remained a friend of the family and attended the deathbed of her half-sister, the philanthropist Lady Elizabeth Hastings.<sup>16</sup> In 1717 he became the tutor of Edward Harley, the nephew of Robert Harley, 1st earl of Oxford, who in his days of power in Anne’s reign had dominated the appointments to canonries at Christ Church and introduced a strong Tory element into the chapter.<sup>17</sup> Benson had known his son Edward, Lord Harley,<sup>18</sup> in London, and acknowledged the great number of obligations that he owed to him there.<sup>19</sup> Through him he had his first experiences of the political world, and attended the debate in the Lords on the political riots at Oxford, which he described to his pupil in a letter addressed from Leicester Fields.<sup>20</sup> To be acceptable to the Harleys as a tutor Benson must have imbibed the prevalent spirit of Toryism at Christ Church; it was to prove a taint difficult to dispel in the political climate of Walpole’s time.

Benson’s closest and most enduring friendship with a pupil was with Thomas Fermor, 2nd earl of Leominster, who matriculated in 1714.<sup>21</sup> In 1717 he persuaded Benson to accompany him on the Grand Tour. This brought Benson’s Oxford career to an end, and with it, to his regret, his direct association with his pupil Edward Harley. In his will he remembered Christ Church in the same affectionate terms as Charterhouse, leaving ‘£100 to the dean and chapter of Christ Church in Oxford wherein I had the blessing to be a Student’. Benson left little record of the Grand Tour, on which he appears to have played the typical role of a mentor: in November 1717 he wrote to Edward, Lord Harley, from Blois where they had gone because they thought the best French was to be heard there.<sup>22</sup> Throughout his life he was to remain on close terms with Leominster, who was often mentioned in his correspondence.<sup>23</sup>

The tour was important for Benson’s career because of the friendships he made. When in Paris he met Thomas Secker, a future archbishop of Canterbury, who was then a dissenter, studying medicine. Secker was a friend of Joseph Butler, a future bishop of Durham and author of *The Analogy of Religion*, who had been a fellow pupil at Samuel Jones’s dissenting academy at Tewkesbury. Butler was already an Anglican, and when an undergraduate at Oriel College had become a close friend of Edward Talbot, the son of William Talbot, then bishop of Salisbury. Butler introduced Secker and Benson to Talbot, and around these three there formed a closely knit group of family friends which lasted throughout Benson’s life. After his marriage Edward Talbot became rector of East Hendred in Berkshire, and Benson’s sister Catherine went to share the Talbots’ home there. Talbot died tragically of smallpox at the age of twenty, and his wife was left in straitened circumstances with his posthumous daughter Catherine.<sup>24</sup> When Benson’s sister married Secker in 1725 they were able to provide for the Talbots, who went to live with them *en famille*. The Talbots were greatly loved friends of Benson throughout his life. He described his bequest to them as ‘the mark I am able to give to them of the great respect and affection I bear to them and gratitude to the memory of Mr. Edward Talbot’.

On his deathbed Talbot commended Benson, Butler and Secker to his father. Secker was still a dissenting layman but the bishop was able to provide promptly for Benson and Butler, who



HOC PRÆMIUM

ex legato

MARTINI BENSON

*(Carthusianis propositum reportabit)*

Fig. 1. Book-plate at Charterhouse School showing Benson's armorial bearings (reproduced by kind permission of the Headmaster and Governing Body of Charterhouse School).

became prebendaries of Salisbury in 1720. In the following year Benson became archdeacon of Berkshire, an office he was to hold until he became bishop. The three visitational charges addressed to his clergy<sup>25</sup> show that from the outset he had clear ideas of his own duties, which he sharply distinguished from those of the bishop. The bishop was to attend to the great affairs of the nation and to direct the clergy as to their duty 'in having a more immediate regard to the doctrines of the church'. The archdeacon's business was with the parish, especially the house of God and the house of the minister. Benson was an active archdeacon, and by 1731 he had completed the parochial visitations of his four deaneries.<sup>26</sup> His meticulous attention found much to criticise, and in his charges he was, in his own words, 'ready with great freedom to mention whatever he thought necessary for the discharge of the duties of clergy and churchwardens'. They anticipate in spirit and letter much of what he was later to say as bishop of Gloucester. His interventions were effective, and for all but a few parishes he was later able to record 'all done' against the often extensive list of failings that he had observed.

In 1722 William Talbot was translated to Durham, and the much richer prizes of that diocese were now accessible to his protégés. In 1724 the second prebendal stall in the cathedral became vacant and Benson succeeded to it — one of the 'golden prebends' of Durham which, with one exception, were worth at least £500 a year.<sup>27</sup> As Secker had by then been ordained Talbot was

also able to assist him, and he was appointed to the no less golden living of Houghton-le-Spring. His wife, a chronic invalid, found it impossible to live there, and it was intended that he should proceed to a prebend (the least valuable) expected to become vacant, and that this should be supplemented by a modest living. This led to Benson's relinquishing his prebend of Salisbury in 1727. The living intended for Secker had been promised to a Worcestershire clergyman, and to overcome the difficulty Benson vacated his stall at Salisbury (which was worth £70 a year) to make it available to him, thereby releasing the Durham living for Secker.<sup>28</sup>

As a prebendary of Durham Benson appears to have conformed at least to the formal requirements of residence,<sup>29</sup> which in his case apparently involved attendance for a month in the autumn. To fall short would have been uncharacteristic, particularly as he was to devise a scheme of penalties for defaulting prebendaries of Gloucester.<sup>30</sup> The hazards of 18th-century travel between Gloucester and Durham do not seem to have troubled him as he makes only passing reference to his journeys.<sup>31</sup> At least on one occasion he did more at Durham than was strictly required when, in Secker's recollection, 'in the winter of 1728 or 1729 Mr. Benson and I took a great deal of pains in putting part of the ancient deeds and writings of the church of Durham in order'.<sup>32</sup> He also became involved in the affairs of the county. At the time of the rebellion of 1745 he joined five principal inhabitants in making recommendations to the Court on the deployment of troops in defence of the north-east, which, as Newcastle wrote to tell him, were accepted by the Council.<sup>33</sup> He was attached to Durham throughout his life and made a bequest to the infirmary at Newcastle.

In 1727 Benson became rector of Bletchley in Buckinghamshire, and retained the living until he became bishop. The appointment was quite incongruent with the rest of his career and came his way through his kinship with the antiquary Browne Willis,<sup>34</sup> the patron of the living. Willis intended it for his son John, but the incumbent died in 1727 when John was still a schoolboy and Willis wanted someone who would be prepared to surrender it when John could succeed. Benson was very suitable: he was a relative for whom Willis had a great admiration and was already well provided for; indeed Benson gave all the profits of the living to Willis. He employed a curate and rarely if ever resided, but was a benefactor of the parish, giving 'an extreme rich altar and pulpit cloth of crimson velvet and gold fringes and lace' to Bletchley church,<sup>35</sup> and £100 to augment the endowment of Fenny Stratford chapel. When he became bishop of Gloucester he had to resign the living. There was still nearly a year before John could take it up, and Benson gave Browne Willis advice on how to conduct matters during the interval.<sup>36</sup> Later he warned John not to forfeit what income had become due to him since he might thereby prejudice his future rights:<sup>37</sup> advice of the kind he was later to impress upon the clergy of his diocese. He may perhaps have found the situation uncongenial: when, after he became a bishop, the earl of Huntingdon offered him a living he said that even if he could he would not think it right to accept a cure he could not attend to.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Political Route to the Episcopal Bench*

After his return to England Benson soon became involved in the politics of Church and Court. When Walpole came to power in 1721 he relied for his choice of clerical appointments on Edmund Gibson, successively bishop of Lincoln and London, who was a staunch Whig. By then Benson was enough of a Whig to infuriate his old Tory acquaintance William Stratford, a canon of Christ Church since 1703 and a prolific correspondent of Edward, Lord Harley, to whom he wrote: 'I hear Benson has played the fool in his visitation as Archdeacon of Berkshire . . . Such speeches can have but one end, to recommend the speakers to the men in power, but they do as little service to a cause as they do credit to the authors'.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless the shadow of Toryism

over Benson was enough to discredit him in the eyes of the Whigs when in 1724 the regius professorships of history and modern languages were established at Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>40</sup> Gibson played a leading part in setting them up. He was concerned that education at the universities was divorced from the needs of the modern world and intended to 'furnish a succession of fit persons for the service of God in the State as well as the Church'. Benson's knowledge of the Continent and its languages made him a strong contender,<sup>41</sup> but the scheme had political overtones, since it was hoped that the lessons of history would inculcate loyalty to the Hanoverians in what was generally thought to be the Tory bastion of Oxford. Townshend, the secretary of state, showed when he wrote to Gibson that he was well aware of the doubts about Benson's politics: 'I have heard from all hands of the very great reputation of Mr. Benson, and tho' your Lordship may have heard that he is inclined to be Toryish yet I am convinced that at bottom he has very sound principles for the present government. . . . From what I have learned on all sides I have a strong inclination to Mr. Benson'.<sup>42</sup> Townshend suggested that Gibson might sound out Benson's views on a possible return to the academic world, but he failed to persuade Gibson that politically Benson was beyond reproach.

In 1726 Benson became chaplain to the Prince of Wales, and continued to serve him after appointment as a Royal Chaplain when he became king in the following year. Consequently Benson was given the degree of D.D. on the king's visit to Cambridge in 1728. As a Royal Chaplain he was well placed to play a part in national affairs and soon became involved in the project for establishing a college in the Americas. Its central figure was George Berkeley, later bishop of Cloyne, a lifelong friend and correspondent whom he had first met in Italy during his Grand Tour. Funds had been left to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) for the establishment of a college, which through Berkeley's persuasion was destined for Bermuda. When its charter was granted in 1725 Benson was one of those empowered to accept subscriptions.<sup>43</sup> The government undertook to make a grant of £20,000 and though this was not immediately forthcoming Berkeley sailed for America. He may have hoped that after it was established Benson would become the first bishop in America,<sup>44</sup> and in 1730 he put Benson in charge of the college's affairs in England.<sup>45</sup> Benson had already warned him that the prospects were not good,<sup>46</sup> and when the college was offered the income on the £20,000 without any undertaking that this was to be a permanent arrangement, he recognised that no one would commit himself to the Bermudas on so precarious a basis.<sup>47</sup> Berkeley returned to England in 1732.

At Court in 1731 Benson met John Perceval, 1st earl of Egmont, whom he came to know well. Egmont, a friend of Berkeley, became the first president of the company set up in 1732 for the colonisation of Georgia, a project distinct from Berkeley's though often confused with it. As a member of the S.P.G. Benson had a difficult meeting with Egmont's board when it made 'heavy complaint' about the S.P.G.'s withdrawal of an annual allowance of £50 paid to the minister at Savannah. Benson acted with diplomacy.<sup>48</sup> Shortly afterward the board acknowledged a gift of £10 from him.<sup>49</sup> He maintained his interest in the Americas throughout his life. His enthusiasm stimulated the people of Gloucestershire to be generous, and in 1744 he thanked his clergy for a collection of £600 for the S.P.G. in America, which was *per capita* the best of any diocese.<sup>50</sup> He was among the earliest advocates of an episcopate in America when he preached the anniversary sermon of the S.P.G. in 1740. He had little hope of success, writing to Dr. Samuel Johnson of King's College in New York: 'My own interest is, to be sure, inconsiderable, but the united power of the bishops here is not enough to effect so reasonable and right a thing'.<sup>51</sup> This proved true: out of the £70 he left to the S.P.G., £50 was 'to be added to the fund for settling bishops on our plantations in the Americas, hoping that a design so necessary and unexceptionable cannot fail to be put into execution'.

For Benson to become a Royal Chaplain his views must have seemed impeccably Whiggish. A royal chaplaincy was recognised as an almost infallible passport to advancement, and preferment in the Church was a political matter. With the bishops accounting for more than one tenth of the membership of the House of Lords they could furnish a political bloc which could, and sometimes did, determine a crucial vote. His path to a bishopric took a tortuous course. In 1733 the see of Gloucester fell vacant by the death of Elias Sydall. The lord chancellor was then Lord Talbot of Hensol, son of the bishop of Durham and elder brother of the late Edward Talbot. He nominated Thomas Rundle, a future bishop of Derry, who had been an intimate friend of the late Edward Talbot and had followed the same path of preferment to Salisbury and Durham as Edward's other friends. Gibson intervened, ostensibly because Rundle was reputed to be tainted with Deism,<sup>52</sup> possibly because he resented the chancellor's intrusion into what he saw as a clerical preserve.<sup>53</sup> After a controversy of nearly twelve months, during which the see remained vacant, the bishopric was offered to Benson, in part, it was said, to mollify the chancellor. He declined, on the grounds of ill-health and a wish for a quiet life. It was then offered to Matthew Mawson, president of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, who after some hesitation also declined. The Court now insisted that Benson should accept: 'there was a necessity to look out for persons of his merit'.<sup>54</sup> Though still reluctant he was now reconciled to the proposal, but he was anxious not to offend a member of a family to which he owed much, and asked the chancellor if he had any objection. Talbot replied with great civility, but stopped short of saying anything that might seem to support Gibson's rejection of Rundle.<sup>55</sup> Benson described the circumstances of his appointment in a letter to Browne Willis of 26 December 1734:<sup>56</sup>

I shall strangely surprise you, but not as much as myself was surprised with the news, when I acquaint you that I am, after all, to become a bishop. My br. Secker and I were but on Tuesday with Sir R. Walpole to return our thanks, the one for being, the other for not being, a bishop, and he repeated to me the promise that he had in a letter sent an account of, that his Majesty would give me the first deanery that I desired.<sup>57</sup> Before 3 o'clock that afternoon I was sent for, and acquainted that Dr. Mawson had desired to be excused from taking the bishopric, and I was nominated to the bishopric of Gloucester, and the person who delivered the message said he had engaged that I would accept it, which accordingly I have since done. I shall only say that this has, in so extraordinary and, I may say, Providential a manner come to me, I trust that the same good Providence will enable me to do the duty of it. I know my inability and the only thing I can say of myself is that I have a heart sincerely and zealously to do all the good in the station that I may be capable of doing.

Benson determined never to leave the diocese of Gloucester. He was influenced by political considerations<sup>58</sup> but undoubtedly held his see in affection. Before Secker became canon of Christ Church and bishop of Oxford in 1737 Benson was approached, but did not wish to be considered. He told Berkeley: 'I am, thank God, so much contented where I am that I have no desire to move to Oxford or any other place'.<sup>59</sup> He said the same when Huntingdon tried to offer him a living in his gift.<sup>60</sup> It was a determination thought so remarkable that it is recalled on his memorial tablet in his cathedral. Translation to a richer see was an established avenue to advancement, and with an income of £900 a year the see of Gloucester ranked low in a range which extended from £450 a year (Bristol) to £9,000 a year (Canterbury).<sup>61</sup> Even though Benson's income was augmented by his Durham prebend he was one of the less wealthy bishops, but he seems not to have found his financial sacrifices oppressive. He made a jocular reference in correspondence to the contrasting riches of the adjacent see of Worcester,<sup>62</sup> but he was able to be a generous benefactor of his cathedral and left £3,490 in cash—substantial if not excessive by the episcopal standards of the time.

*Episcopal Ministry: Lord Spiritual*

Benson maintained that his first love was his diocese: he wanted to spend as much time there as he could and wished that more of his fellow bishops felt similarly.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, he said, it was their duty to attend Parliament to protect the interests of the Church. His own attendance was good, and he was absent from the House for a total of no more than three whole weeks and about thirty isolated days in the first four years of his episcopate.<sup>64</sup> Thereafter he was absent for the first two months of several sessions, and towards the end of his life his attendances became sporadic. When he arrived in the House the Church was under heavy fire provoked by the introduction of Queen Anne's Bounty, seen by many to be an unjustified deflection of revenue into the pockets of an already wealthy institution. The levying of tithe was especially criticised. As archdeacon of Berkshire he had already expressed his concern at 'the late attempt of Parliament to take away some part of the Church's right and property',<sup>65</sup> having in mind the bill brought to the Commons by Sir Gilbert Heathcote which placed on an incumbent the onus to demonstrate his right to tithe. The bill was dropped after its first reading.<sup>66</sup> Soon after Benson took his seat in the Lords he was alarmed by their decision that demesne lands of a manor were not subject to the payment of tithe,<sup>67</sup> which he thought 'a notorious injustice, the most notorious affecting the Church for a hundred years'. Though the Bench was unanimous they got almost no support from the lords temporal: 'it was given out that the consequences of the case would affect every one who had an estate, and it was time to put a stop to the growing wealth of the clergy'.<sup>68</sup> In the following year the bishops were more successful in defending what they saw as the interests of the Church when they opposed the Quakers' Tithe bill, intended to relieve Quakers of the excessive charges to which they were subjected when sued for the payment of tithes. It had passed through the Commons with a large majority, but the interests of Church and Law successfully opposed it the Lords.<sup>69</sup> Notwithstanding Walpole's strong advocacy all the bishops present voted against it.

Benson maintained that he was a reluctant parliamentarian, but proved to be an active political bishop. Townshend and Gibson may once have been convinced of his readiness to conform, but once arrived in the House he was staunchly independent. Though he usually supported the ministry he voted against it in several important issues. Often, but not always, he and Secker voted together, so that they came to be known as 'the two brothers'—as indeed they were brothers-in-law. Cartaret, when he came to power on Walpole's fall, invited them to call and 'dissuaded them in a jocular manner from unnecessary opposition'.<sup>70</sup> Benson maintained his independence. He explained his position in a letter to Berkeley:<sup>71</sup> '[I found] some points so doubtful that I did not know how to vote at all, and others so clear, that I was grieved to be under the necessity of voting against the measures of men with whom I have a good deal of acquaintance, and of whom when out of place I have a good opinion'.

Secker and Benson were in opposition in several *causes célèbres*. In 1739 'the biggest party struggle since the Revolution'<sup>72</sup> was joined over the settlement of reparations agreed in respect of disputes with Spain by the convention of El Pardo. Secker and Benson, with Reynolds of Lincoln and Smalbroke of Lichfield and Coventry, were the only bishops among the substantial minority<sup>73</sup> which opposed the Court. Two years later the same four bishops again opposed the ministry in the heated debate on the support given to Admiral Vernon in his West Indies campaign.<sup>74</sup> They especially displeased the ministry by voting with a formed opposition in favour of the appointment of a 'secret committee' to investigate the conduct of the war at large. Since impeccable political deportment was essential if the ladder of preferment was to be climbed and the Crown had the strongest dislike of formed oppositions it seems unlikely that Benson's resolve to stay at Gloucester would have been challenged for a long time. He had realised as early as

1736 that if he was to maintain his independence he must expect to forfeit any prospect of promotion.<sup>75</sup> Secker was left in the poor see of Oxford, with only the living of St. James's, Westminster *in commendam*, until, having by then recanted, he was appointed in 1750 to the deanery of St. Paul's. When the appointment was mooted the duke of Newcastle wrote to his kinsman Henry Pelham:<sup>76</sup> 'When I told him that the bishop of Oxford had renounced opposition, the King answered: "I know. Benson has. He has acted like a gentleman, and I know he has announced it to the opposition themselves. He has told my lord Limerick that he would never again be for a secret committee as long as he lived." I verily believe the King would make Benson bishop of Winchester tomorrow'.

In 1743 the bishops opposed the proposal to change the licensing laws aimed at curbing gin-drinking.<sup>77</sup> The measures in force imposed duties on sales so severe that they merely encouraged evasion. The proposed legislation appeared to many to be a relaxation that would serve only to increase consumption. It was strongly opposed by the bishops. The bill came before the House very shortly after a proposal for taking Hanoverian troops into British pay,<sup>78</sup> and its timing led many, among them Benson, to conclude that the spirituous liquors bill was intended to raise the revenue needed to pay for them: 'there cannot be the same plea of necessity [as had been put forward for the payment of troops] for the method of raising the sum to defray the expense of the measure. There was, I thought, an absolute necessity of doing something to prevent the drinking of gin. But unhappily the increase of vice was found to be a way of increasing the revenue'.<sup>79</sup> He voted against both measures, on this occasion taking a different line from Secker, who spoke strongly in the House on the evils of gin, but did not object to paying the Hanoverians.<sup>80</sup> The evils of gin were to be a preoccupation of Benson for the rest of his life.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Sacramental Ministry: Ordination and Confirmation*

Even though many of the 18th-century clergy were so ill-paid that they could hardly support themselves, Holy Orders were for many poor men the only attainable profession. In their eagerness for ordination some candidates resorted to fraudulent practices, among them the submission of counterfeit testimonials. Benson was well aware of the malpractices that could arise. When archdeacon of Berkshire he told his clergy that the bishop of Salisbury (perhaps not without encouragement) required the names of clergy and their cures set out in their own handwriting as a precaution against forgery.<sup>82</sup> At Gloucester he was careful when ordaining candidates who bore letters dimissory to ensure that they included an assurance as to morals, learning and title (and on some occasions age).<sup>83</sup> He was also alert to the consequences of a system that allowed the supply of ordained clergy to exceed the real demand, with the result that there were far too many parochial clergy. Next worst to admitting the unworthy, he told his clergy,<sup>84</sup> was to admit too many or those without a maintenance. They should seek a curate only where one was really needed, and no one should be admitted without a real title.

The demands of Parliament and of his prebend at Durham meant that almost all Benson's ordinations in his diocese had to be held either in August or shortly before Christmas. He also carried out ordinations in London while Parliament was in session: at Secker's church at St. James's, Westminster, at the royal palace of St. James, and once at St. George's, Queen's Square. Most of the candidates in London were presented with letters dimissory for service in dioceses other than Gloucester. In one case Benson added the note 'this person who came from New England and was to return thither was recommended to me by the bishop of London'<sup>85</sup>—an example of the practical inconveniences arising from the lack of an episcopate in America. While in the north he acted as surrogate for the ailing Bishop Chandler, Talbot's successor at Durham, every year from 1742 until Chandler's death in 1750.<sup>86</sup> He also carried out a visitation of the diocese

of Durham in 1746. He ordained at Scarborough in 1737, a year of great activity in which he conducted a visitation of the diocese of York on behalf of the ageing Archbishop Blackburne. This may have been an act of family friendship, as Blackburne had married Catherine Talbot's great-aunt. In his will he left Benson a service of plate.<sup>87</sup>

Benson's best known ordinand was George Whitefield,<sup>88</sup> the protagonist of Calvinistic Methodism, who was made deacon in 1736. According to Whitefield it was reported to Benson that he had driven fifteen people mad at his first sermon (at St. Mary de Crypt in Gloucester), whereupon Benson, who was well disposed to him, said that he 'hoped that the madness would not be forgotten before next Sunday'.<sup>89</sup> As a consequence of his association with the Wesleys, Whitefield left for North America. He returned to England in 1739 to be ordained priest at Oxford by Benson, who was acting as surrogate for Secker, on the title of his appointment by the Georgia trustees as minister at Savannah. Benson reproached Whitefield for his unorthodox methods. Their subsequent exchange of letters is characteristic of each, with Whitefield 'meekly telling him of his faults'.<sup>90</sup>

In the 18th century confirmations were infrequent, usually being held in association with episcopal visitations. Benson exhorted his clergy to be enthusiastic in catechising and presenting children for confirmation, and was ready to confirm not only at visitations but whenever needed. The manuscript of his confirmation sermon<sup>91</sup> is prefaced by a list of forty-two places where he preached it from 1736 to 1752, thirty of them in the diocese of Gloucester. No account survives of his confirmation services there, but more is known of the confirmations he performed in the diocese of York during the visitation of 1737 when acting for Archbishop Blackburne. This was one of only two visitations in the fourteen years of Blackburne's episcopate,<sup>92</sup> and confirmations were greatly in arrears. In those times even the more conscientious prelates were confronted by great numbers of children gathered in conditions that could become riotous, and Blackburne's dilatoriness meant that Benson confirmed an astonishing 42,500 persons in eight parishes of Yorkshire.<sup>93</sup> This was all the more remarkable because in the same year he also preached his confirmation sermon at four other places in the diocese. The vicar of Halifax gave an account of events there,<sup>94</sup> which incidentally reveals his trepidation at the potentially incendiary situation: 'The Bishop of Gloucester . . . confirmed here at Ripponden'<sup>95</sup> 8,922 or thereabouts by only two at a time, with great devotion and solemnity. He was in the church from about 9 in the morning till near 7 at night on the 10th and 11th of September. The consecration service at Ripponden on the 9th of the month began at 10 in the morning, and ended about 12, after which he confirmed about 1,200 there . . . I took all the precautions that I could to secure order at a time when I expected the greatest want of it in this disorderly mob-situation'. In this the vicar was apparently successful: 'His Lordship seemed most pleased and said many good-natured things to me'.

### *Pastoral Care*

Throughout his episcopate Benson took the same close interest in the parishes of his diocese as he had in Berkshire. He had learned much in Berkshire and arrived at Gloucester with his intentions clear. In his archdiaconal charges he had sharply distinguished the duties of the archdeacon from those of the bishop. When bishop of Gloucester he took a different view of the division of responsibilities and fully intended to take a personal interest in the affairs of his parishes. On his earliest visitation as archdeacon of Berkshire<sup>96</sup> he had expressed great regret that the office of rural dean had fallen into disuse, as rural deans would have been ideal for monitoring parishes. As a bishop he was in a position to appoint the rural deans that he so much wanted and quickly took advantage of the incompetence of the only archdeacon of the diocese,

the aged archdeacon of Gloucester, to institute them in all the deaneries of the diocese. At his primary visitation in 1735 he explained their role in almost exactly the same words as he had used in Berkshire thirteen years before: 'The deans within their respective deaneries must have constant opportunity of seeing and knowing [the state and condition of churches and parsonages] and may be able to give constant information to me in what state things are'.<sup>97</sup>

After his primary visitation Benson held five triennial visitations between 1738 and 1750. His charges<sup>98</sup> show that he could be a stern critic. Already by 1738 he had become aware of many failings (which had often been anticipated in his experiences in Berkshire): 'in most places many not to say most things were found to be out of order'. He found that benefactions had frequently been mishandled. Some had been entirely lost through unwise investments and others let on long leases with inadequate returns, and payments from benefactions were often in arrears. In some cases charities intended for the church had been deflected towards ends which were properly the responsibility of the parish. These even included the churchwardens' expenses at visitations, the parish officers thereby 'plainly robbing the church and putting those benefactions into their own bellies and pockets'. He had found that records of benefactions had been lost while in private hands; the legal costs of repairing the loss and restoring the income from them could be prohibitive. He insisted that records must be scrupulously maintained. Terriers must be preserved<sup>99</sup> and records of charities maintained and exhibited in every church. Benson impressed upon churchwardens that they must be alert to perform their duties in all these matters: reports of *omnia bene* were deeply suspicious and could amount to perjury. To make the churchwardens' task easier he introduced simplified articles of enquiry.

Incumbents, also, were exhorted to attend to their financial responsibilities. Benson reminded them that they must ensure that all the rights and all the income of their benefices descended to their successors, and must take care not to disadvantage them by compounding tithes for a fixed sum vulnerable to a fall in the value of money. He was concerned that many chancels and parsonage houses, for which incumbents were responsible, were in disrepair. The greater the income of the benefice, he said, the greater the responsibility of the incumbent to support and maintain a substantial residence.

Benson's admonitions took effect, and by 1744 he was able to say that he was pleased with the progress that had been made. By then a more active archdeacon had established himself, and Benson was content that he should assume the responsibilities for visitations neglected by his predecessor.

During his visitations Benson observed that there were often not enough church services, a failing which could encourage secession to dissent. Ideally there should be a morning and evening service every Sunday, but he recognised that this ideal could not be realised while there were not sufficient funds to remunerate the clergy needed to provide them. The fall in the value of money had aggravated the inadequacy of stipends that were already low at the Reformation, leading to difficulties which, as Benson realistically recognised, 'it is much more easy to lament than to know how to rectify'. The relief being provided by Queen Anne's Bounty led him to hope that there would be a time, albeit far ahead, when full services would be possible.<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile at least one service must be held, either in the morning or the afternoon.

The matter of non-residence he found even more deplorable: 'the scandal of non-residence and plurality of benefices is even greater than in the church of Rome or any other reformed church'. No minister was to serve more than one church or chapel unless they were part of the same parish, and a resident curate must be provided to supply in the absence of a minister. He noticed that his clergy had been given to employing the cheapest they could find, regardless of merit, and resolved to enforce the recent legislation which specified the acceptable level of

stipend.<sup>101</sup> He was especially severe on matters of residence and performance of duty in the articles of his only surviving enquiry to churchwardens, made in 1750.<sup>102</sup>

Almost nothing survives of the responses to Benson's visitation enquiries, but several documents bearing his autograph are still extant which include information of the kind they must have contained. The most substantial is the survey of his diocese which he began shortly after his arrival and maintained continuously until his death.<sup>103</sup> This includes accounts of charities, gifts, endowments, schools, services and similar matters, which often illustrate the failings he had observed, and occasionally reflect the personal attention he gave to them. He was especially involved with the peculiar of Bibury, where he agreed with the lay rector of Bibury on the form of a submission to the Court of Arches to decide on the rights pertaining to the peculiar, a jurisdiction in dispute since the diocese was founded.<sup>104</sup>

Benson had said that it was the duty of the bishop to guide his clergy in 'regard to the doctrines of the Church', but his exhortations are not prominent in his charges, and it was not until his third visitation that he turned from what he called 'externals'. Every minister, he then reminded them, had made a solemn promise to the exhortation and monition of his flock. He found that not all performed this duty to the utmost of their power, and to assist their pious endeavours he added to the articles of visitation 'a list of small tracts, most of them published by the S.P.C.K.'.<sup>105</sup> His clergy must drive away the erroneous and strange doctrines regrettably prevalent in the diocese of Gloucester, and must be 'a shining light, and a perpetual proof that there is no one thing required of any Christian that it is not in the power of any Christian to practice'—and they should stop talking about money and concentrate on the increase of virtue and religion.

#### *Visitor of the Cathedral*

Benson's relations with the dean and chapter of the cathedral were not always easy. In 1736 he granted a patent of the office of Register jointly to his brother John<sup>106</sup> and William Mount, a notary public already employed in the registry. The dean and chapter had doubts about the legality of joint patents, and the opinion of counsel was sought. Although the patent was found to be good, their hesitation was justified, as counsel reversed an adverse decision at the eleventh hour after belatedly finding a precedent. The patent was then confirmed.<sup>107</sup>

In 1738 a scheme for the stricter regulation of the attendance of the dean and the prebendaries was considered in chapter, no doubt stimulated by Benson. It was determined that each prebendary should reside for two months in the year, residence to involve living in a prebendal house for at least twenty-one consecutive days and not being absent more than two days in any one of the remaining weeks. They were to forfeit 10s. for each day in default, the forfeiture to go towards beautifying the cathedral.<sup>108</sup> The scheme was ratified by Benson in his injunctions after his primary visitation of 1739–40,<sup>109</sup> but it was not until 1750 that these regulations, having been found to contravene the Henrician statutes of 1544, were ratified by an order of the King in Council.<sup>110</sup>

The stormiest episode occurred towards the end of Benson's life when in 1751 he had a sharp difference with the dean, Daniel Newcombe. Two prebendaries had laid a formal complaint about him to Benson as visitor concerning the appointment of lay clerks and minor canons, access to the chests of the treasury, and the powers of the dean in dealing with the leasing and letting of lands. Benson upheld the first two objections and required his injunctions to be registered. This Newcombe 'peremptorily refused to do', whereupon Benson suspended him for six months from 20 December 1751.<sup>111</sup> Nothing further is recorded. Newcombe retained the post of dean until 1758.

*Care for the Fabric of the Cathedral and the Palace*

Benson commissioned much work on the buildings and furnishings of the cathedral and the episcopal palace. His contemporaries thought that he had ‘excellent taste for painting, architecture and the other fine arts’.<sup>112</sup> His interests were no doubt stimulated by his Continental travels. Cole noted that his palace was ‘elegantly fitted up with pictures and prints which he brought with him from Rome’. Italian and French subjects predominated in the thirty-four ‘books of prints, antiquities, architectural plans, views etc.’ bequeathed to the cathedral library that were listed in his will.<sup>113</sup> Probably the most important is ‘*Les plans, profils et élévations de la ville et du château de Versailles . . . dessinés et engravés en 1714 et 1715*’ published by the Parisian engraver Gilles Demortain.<sup>114</sup> Benson provided one of the engravings which illustrate the 1745 edition of John Batteley’s *Antiquitates Rutupinae*.<sup>115</sup> He also had some interest in numismatics and donated eleven coins which are illustrated in the Hearne catalogue of the Ashmolean Museum.<sup>116</sup> The earl of Leominster gave him the two volumes of *Le gemme antiche . . . figurata . . . in Roma* of the 17th-century numismatist Leonardo Agostini.<sup>117</sup>

Cole gave an enthusiastic account of the work commissioned by Benson:<sup>118</sup>

The Cathedral here is not only the most elegant pile of building (bating the clumsiness of the pillars in the nave, which are round and massive) but also the most regular and adorned of any cathedral in England, partly owing to the present bishop who has spared no cost to complete what was begun by Dean Chetwood.<sup>119</sup>

The Bishop when he new paved the church took away an old screen and removed an old sort of chapel on the north in which lie the tombs of Machen and Blackleach and made it regular, and gave a new and most elegant screen before you enter the choir, of stone standing on various small pillars, all designed by Mr. Kent. In the middle of it is this in gold letters:– ‘Martinus/Episcopus/fecit/Anno Dom. MDCCXLVI/et consecrationis suae XII<sup>mo</sup>’. The Bishop has also spared no expense in adorning every other part of the cathedral<sup>120</sup> and entirely new pinnacled with stone our Lady’s chapel, which wanted it before. He has also laid out vast amount of money in refitting up the episcopal palace which is most elegant, but his Lordship’s chapel, newly wainscoted with cedar, and the most beautiful east window of painted glass, representing Our Saviour’s ascension, which cost his Lordship £150, though small, is beyond description.

The Mr. Kent of Cole’s account was the unevenly talented William Kent.<sup>121</sup> He was a protégé of Richard Boyle, 3rd earl of Burlington, who had met him in Italy. Burlington worked hard to secure commissions for him and probably introduced him to Benson. Burlington came to know Benson well. He gave him the volume of Palladio’s illustrations of buildings in ancient Rome which he had himself published,<sup>122</sup> and he nominated Benson as a trustee of the Boyle lectureships ‘for proving the Christian religion against notorious infidels’ instituted by his kinsman Robert Boyle. Kent’s neo-Gothic screen was his best-known work at Gloucester. Cole’s favourable opinion was not universally held. Horace Walpole said that in it ‘Kent knew no more than anywhere else how to enter into Gothic taste’.<sup>123</sup> A modern judgement sees it as ‘a strange mixture of Gothic, classical and chinoiserie’.<sup>124</sup> It was dismantled in 1820.<sup>125</sup> Other incursions which would have been less easily obliterated were narrowly avoided. Benson shared Cole’s estimation of the great Norman pillars, and intended that they should be ‘channelled or fluted’. Apparently he was restrained only by practical considerations.<sup>126</sup>

*Life and Works as Bishop of Gloucester*

Benson was greatly esteemed. To Berkeley he was ‘Titus, the delight of mankind’, and to his anonymous biographer he was the delight of all who knew him. Catherine Talbot’s

correspondence<sup>127</sup> includes a vivid account of Browne Willis's quaintly expressed admiration for his cousin:

The Bishop of Gloucester is his idol, and if Mr. Willis were Pope, St. Martin, as he calls him, would not want a minute for canonisation. To honour last Sunday as it deserved, he came to dine with us in a tie-wig, that exceeds indeed all description. 'Tis a tie-wig . . . that he has had, he says, these nine years, and of late it has lain at his barber's never to be put on but once a year in honour of the Bishop of Gloucester's birthday.

He seems to have captivated new acquaintances very quickly. Spencer Cowper, appointed dean of Durham in 1746 and disliking the north, at once found him 'my only comfort at present, and I believe will always be my greatest',<sup>128</sup> and always looked forward to his next prebendal visit. George Leigh, the vicar of Halifax whom Benson met while confirming there, thought him 'a man one would want to spend one's life with, rather than a few days'.<sup>129</sup> William Cole visited Gloucester briefly in 1746 and years later recalled Benson's hospitality:<sup>130</sup>

The only reason why his friends wish him a translation is from his beneficent and hospitable spirit which would have more room to exert itself in a richer see, for his Lordship, being a single man,<sup>131</sup> makes it his rule constantly to reside in his diocese except the time of his residence at Durham,<sup>132</sup> and to lay out the income of his preferment in the place from whence he receives it . . . . That his open and generous temper proceeds merely from a true greatness of soul and natural generosity is evident from this: that notwithstanding his table is spread with the greatest plenty and delicacy, yet such is his Lordship's abstemiousness that it is with the greatest seeming satisfaction that he sees his friends partake of it, and at the same time not so much as sets down himself, from a disability of eating meat, which occasions a disorder in his head, but with the utmost condescension often prevents the diligence of his servants by helping his guests to anything they stand in need of, or walks about the room till dinner is over, when he has a pot of tea with cream and bread and butter. This much I was obliged to put down from a thorough sense of gratitude for the humane and candid reception I met with from his Lordship, though a perfect stranger to him.

Cole saw something of the ill-health that afflicted Benson with little intermission throughout his life. His biographer knew more: 'Bad nerves, bad health and naturally bad spirits were so totally subdued [by his piety] that he not only seemed, but in reality was, the most happy of men'.<sup>133</sup> Thus he appeared even to those close to him. Secker, visiting him at Gloucester soon after his consecration, found him bearing up well under the dignities of his new office—though, Secker said, all his honours would avail him not, so long as 'Dicky Dalton' (Richard Dalton of Lincolnshire, a 'learned and agreeable friend') continued to beat him at chess.<sup>134</sup> His cheerful bearing encouraged his ailing sister and her husband when she went to recuperate at Gloucester.<sup>135</sup> Catherine Talbot had a warm welcome from Benson at Gloucester and planned agreeable schemes with him there.<sup>136</sup> Notwithstanding this façade of cheerfulness, however, Benson was dissembling. It was not until he made his will that he advertised his disabilities, in a variation on the conventional formula of the times: 'I most humbly recommend my soul to God . . . beseeching Him . . . to behold it with an eye of pity to consider the gross infirmities that I have laboured under (known to Him but greater than the world has known them to be)'. The mask may occasionally have slipped: when at Gloucester Cole took the opportunity of a gossip with his old college friends Edward Sparkes, master of the College School, and John Walker, a physician of the city. According to Cole they 'did not speak of Benson with the veneration which was common': they found him 'peevisish in temper, as well as not being looked on as orthodox in his views'. Cole did not want to hear any more about one whom he held in such esteem. 'As to his Temper' he wrote indignantly, 'it was not to be wondered at, that it was not always the same, for he laboured almost continually under a most violent headache'.<sup>137</sup>

Towards the end of his life a sombre mood overtook Benson. His charges to his clergy had always been austere, but in 1750 a new note appeared. He saw the recent earthquake in London as a divine retribution for the sins of the 'Headquarters of the wickedness of the land'<sup>138</sup> and detected a spread of London's vices to the towns and villages of the kingdom, as much in Cheltenham as anywhere. Even the widespread contagion among cattle he thought to be a visitation to punish intemperance and excess. He exhorted his clergy to warn their people of their danger and, once again, to set them an example. Similar sentiments were expressed from many pulpits of the times, but a more personal note of unhappiness is sounded in his last letter to Berkeley, written six months before his death.<sup>139</sup> 'One symptom of old age', he wrote, 'if I feel not, others will feel very strong upon me, is to be querulous, and if not *laudator temporis acti* yet a censurer of the present times, which latter I am sure I have the greatest reason for, and greater still every day likely to have'. Berkeley had referred to England as the freest country in Europe: there was indeed freedom of one kind in it, said Benson, 'a most unbounded licentiousness of all sorts, a disregard of all authority, sacred and civil, a regard to nothing except diversion and vicious pleasures. . . . Those accursed spirituous liquors, which to the shame of our Government are so easily to be had, will, if they continue to be drunk, destroy our very people. The evil state of our affairs is a constant topic everywhere, both in Parliament and at large, but it is all talk and nothing is done'. Benson had come far from the hopes expressed fourteen years before for Parliament and his part in it.

His death came quickly. On 8 June 1752 he was in good health, and wrote to Secker that he had a great deal of business and company and was expecting Lord and Lady Berkeley to dinner.<sup>140</sup> He was then summoned to the deathbed of Bishop Butler at Bath, but had to leave a day later, after a distressing parting,<sup>141</sup> to conduct a confirmation at a distant part of his diocese.<sup>142</sup> During his journey, which as usual he made on horseback, his condition worsened and he had to be lifted down when he arrived. On the next day he went through the business of the confirmation service, but grew gradually worse. Secker received a letter written on 12 August in which Benson thought his case was desperate.<sup>143</sup> He died on 30 August. In his will he expressed the wish to be buried in the cathedral 'at the west end before the middle of the great door just beyond the steps', with a small memorial placed on the north-west end of the wall 'with only a simple account upon it who the person lying interred near it was'. The plain memorial accurately summarises the events of Benson's life and concludes:

His character, which he forbad his executors here to inscribe on the small memorial tablet erected here by his order, this diocese, and the nation, will long remember with reverence and love, but his many nearer friends with veneration and tenderness in proportion as each knew him more intimately. And a worthy person,<sup>144</sup> induced by esteem alone, hath taken care, in another part of this church, that ages to come shall be distinctly acquainted with it.

Benson published nothing but three occasional sermons. A few other sermons survive in manuscript. An address on Psalm 37 v. 38 (Book of Common Prayer): 'Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right . . .'<sup>145</sup> was sufficiently uncontroversial to be preached fifty-nine times between 1722 and 1751, on six occasions before members of the royal household. At Gloucester in 1747 and Durham in 1749 his text was Ecclesiasticus iii. vv. 21–2: 'Seek out not the things that are too hard for thee, neither search the things that are above thy strength . . . But what is commanded thee, think thereupon with reverence . . .'<sup>146</sup> The limits to our knowledge, he maintained, are imposed by divine dispensation: we should thank God for letting us know what is good for us and concealing unnecessary knowledge that could even be harmful. He deplored the divisions in the Church over small matters: the date of Easter; is Christ **in** or **of** two natures?—indeed the more abstruse the concept the greater the misplaced zeal in pursuing it. The Popish invention of transubstantiation having been seen by the Reformers for the

absurdity it is, another invention—consubstantiation—had appeared to divide the reformed Church. Popish transubstantiation, Lutheran consubstantiation: what, he asked, has Christianity to do with either of these ridiculous words? Possibly it was this reductionist theology which led Cole's old friends at Gloucester to doubt his orthodoxy.

Benson was an advocate of liturgical reform, wanting changes like those that Archbishop Tillotson had pressed for in 1689 when a commission reviewed the Book of Common Prayer and the Canons of the Church of England.<sup>147</sup> He revived the proposal for fewer repetitions of the Lord's Prayer in services, and had the support of some of his fellow bishops, but the Archbishop of Canterbury said that it was not timely to reopen the matter.<sup>148</sup> He also appears to have felt strongly about the Athanasian creed, which many wanted to have modified or even abolished, particularly its damnatory clauses. He does not mention it in his surviving correspondence, and all that is now known was told to Samuel Glasse<sup>149</sup> by William Deighton, the aged rector of Eastington. Glasse recalled the matter in a letter written after Benson's death. Deighton said that when he told his curate not to read the creed, the young man consulted Benson, who told him not to worry his head about such trifles. This suggests that Benson thought that the creed was an abstruse concept not to be pursued, but Deighton also told another, and different, story. When, about the turn of the century, he had been the curate of the future Bishop Bull at Avening, he was himself told by Bull not to read the creed. When, much later, Benson heard of this, he must have considered that Bull's status as a patristic scholar meant that his views must carry weight, and he asked Deighton to set it out in writing. Glasse, who probably knew more about the matter than he put in this letter, was 'a little afraid of the soundness of [Benson's] faith', but his own reaction was sympathetic. Piously rejecting any suggestion that he should be infected with this heretical air, he nevertheless admitted that he had learned from this episode to have more charity to those who objected to the damnatory clauses 'as fitter to be pronounced by the Judge of all the earth, than by the mouth of simple man'. This was a view held by many, among them Tillotson, and was perhaps all that Benson's unsoundness amounted to.

In his role as political bishop Benson preached the anniversary sermon on the martyrdom of King Charles I before the Lords in 1738. He had no difficulty in demonstrating to their satisfaction that the evils of fanaticism and the tyranny of Popery had been superseded by the inestimable blessings of a limited monarchy and an episcopal Protestant Church: 'the interest of both Prince and People equally depends on the preservation of each of them—let every one of us, each in his proper station, contribute his utmost to support and improve our happy constitution both in Church and State'. With the menace of Jacobitism always looming, hatred of Popery was never far away. At his primary visitation he recommended 'the excellent tracts against Popery published in the time of King James II' which soon afterwards were reprinted by Gibson.<sup>150</sup> Through Queen Anne's Bounty, he said, 'Protestant liberality had changed into a relief [that] which Popish tyranny had laid as a heavy burden on the parochial clergy'. Even his confirmation sermon deals a glancing blow at Popish practices. However, his professional detestation of Popery did not necessarily extend to individual Papists, and he seems to have been on friendly terms with Thomas Stonor of the Oxfordshire recusant family.<sup>151</sup>

Benson was a good man who deserved the accolades of his contemporaries. Yet he was a member of a society which 'in its corporate life affirmed existing ranks and inequalities and exhibited contemporary patterns of deference, and through its functionaries disseminated the assumptions and prejudices of the society within which they worked',<sup>152</sup> and an anachronistic judgement imposed today might find some of what he said to be unworthy. There is, not surprisingly, little democratic thought in his address before the Lords. One of the evils of the Commonwealth was that 'the attention of the common people had been drawn off from their own business to the public proceedings. When the lower people are taken up with these things they must be

taken off from their labour. And when by idleness they have helped to bring distress upon themselves they murmur at those who rule over them'; and he continued with a dictum that Marx would not have found unfamiliar: 'Religion above all things conduces to secure respect and obedience to the civil magistrate'. He again struck a utilitarian note in his address to the S.P.G. in 1740: 'If we were but wise enough to consider only the advantage of our own trade in America, yet for the sake of that [alone] we should take care to propagate the Christian religion . . . which enjoins those things which make commerce gainful'.

Although he was devoted to the service of his diocese, yet 'the affirmation of existing ranks and inequalities' within it is unmistakable in his addresses to his clergy. At his visitations in 1750 he announced to his satisfaction that the first goal of the Bounty, that of augmenting all livings worth not more than £10 a year, was now very nearly reached. Some among his audiences must have heard him with a satisfaction that was limited, especially when admonished that it was not for a piece of bread that they had entered the Lord's service, and that there would be an increase of service required wherever there had been one of income. 'I wish the clergy of the poorest income in the lowest state would reflect how much they have it in their power to be of as real high value and as highly valued as they shall please. . . . The more low and deserving, the more they appear in a higher light. However, were that not to be so, let us but contemplate the figure which a good man in this situation makes in the eyes of his Master and Saviour'. Perhaps this led the less well-disposed to echo the views of Smollett's penniless curate on his wealthy vicar,<sup>153</sup> and justice to Benson requires the mention of two instances where he worked hard to ease the plight of his clergy: at Winchcombe,<sup>154</sup> where the over-rigorous application of the regulations of Queen Anne's Bounty had caused hardship, and at North Nibley,<sup>155</sup> where he responded to the *cri de coeur* of an impoverished incumbent oppressed by his patron in the matter of dilapidations. It is also just to add to the encomiums that Benson earned from his social peers the view of a member of the 'inferior clergy', John Jelf, rector of Blaisdon from 1728 to 1782 on £50 a year.<sup>156</sup> Jelf entered in his commonplace book 'Upon Friday evening about six was buried in the cathedral . . . the corpse of our most excellent prelate Martin Benson, lord bishop of the diocese, of whom to say all he deserves is almost impossible; to say nothing further would be quite unpardonable . . . '.

It cannot be said that Benson was the equal of the most outstanding of his contemporaries. He cannot rival Berkeley or Butler as a thinker, or Gibson as a scholar—or as a politician. These are rigorous comparisons, and Abbey's appraisal of over a century ago remains valid: 'there is scarcely any bishop of the eighteenth century who deserves more honourable mention'.<sup>157</sup> In 1864 *The Times* made honourable mention of the late Bishop Davys of Peterborough: 'His ambition through life was to be good rather than great. Higher praise it is impossible to bestow'.<sup>158</sup> It is a judgement which may also serve, in its ambivalence, for Benson.

### *Acknowledgement*

I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Taylor for his valuable comments on this article.

### *Notes and References*

1. A brief anonymous biography of Benson 'by one who knew him well' is included in Beilby Porteus, *A Review of the Life and Character of Dr. Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury* (1770), p. xxiii. See also (the Revd.) Martin E. Benson, 'Memoir of Dr. Martin Benson, Bishop of Gloucester (1735–1752)', *Records of Buckinghamshire* 4 (1869), 194.
2. British Library (B.L.) Add. MS. 19819, f. 84: *The genealogy of Dr. Martin Benson, chaplain to H.M. King George II* (an undated account). It traces Benson's ancestry to Edward I.

3. Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. J. fol. 2, f. 181.
4. J. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (1812–15), ii, 165 n.
5. B.L. Add. MS. 32726, f. 92: Benson to Newcastle, 31 Jan. 1752.
6. Public Record Office (P.R.O.), PROB 11/797 (P.C.C. 249 Bettesworth), ff. 176–9.
7. Information kindly given by Mrs. Shirley Corke, archivist of Charterhouse.
8. Information kindly given by Mrs. Judith Curthoys, archivist of Christ Church.
9. Members on the foundation at Christ Church were designated 'Students'. In Benson's day they were of two categories: Westminster Students and canoneer Students, of whom Benson was one. Canoneers were nominated by members of the chapter and were entered on the electoral roll in order of the seniority of the nominating canon. Progress up the roll to election could be slow, and Benson did not become a Student until six years after matriculating as a commoner. In principle Studentships were freeholds for life but in practice disincentives and disqualifications limited their average tenure to twelve years in the early 1700s. Among the causes of disqualification was appointment to a preferment by institution. Appointment to archdeaconries and certain prebends did not involve institution, so that Benson, although by then archdeacon of Berkshire and prebendary of Salisbury, did not surrender his Studentship until 1724, when he became a prebendary of Durham.
10. Mrs. Curthoys suggests that his graduation was delayed after he had met the requirements for the B.A. degree so that he should not be disqualified from appointment to a Studentship.
11. *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, ed. C.E. Doble *et al.* (1885–1921), v, 60 (22 May 1715). Hearne added a footnote 'he hath another character since', and his subsequent entries in *Collections* reflect the dislike of Hearne the arch-Tory for Benson the 'most vile Whig' (vii, 287 (23 Oct. 1721); x, 2 (1 Apr. 1728)). Hearne showed little discretion; 'Mr Benson's chief design of travelling (besides lucre) seems to have been as a Spy, and to find out his [Leominster's] faults' (1721); '[Benson] will do anything for preferment and therefore truly honest men avoid as much as they can conversation with him' (1728). By 1735 Hearne had become more charitable: 'The Bletchley living was the *premium virtutis* to Bp. Benson for his excellent instructions to the Fermor family with whom he travelled'.
12. *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, v, 333 (2 Nov. 1716).
13. E.G.W. Bill, *Education at Christ Church, Oxford, 1660–1800* (1988), 233.
14. E. Bentham, *Advices to a Young Man . . . upon his Coming to the University* (c. 1760), 19.
15. When the Countess of Huntingdon 'turned methodist' her husband, in an attempt to dissuade her, asked her to talk to Benson, who 'attempted to convince her Ladyship of the unnecessary strictness of her sentiments and conduct'. Methodist sources describe how she routed him by reference to the scriptures and with arguments from the Articles and Homilies, so that his temper was ruffled and he made haste to depart: *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* by 'a member of the house of Shirley and Hastings' (1849), i, 18; the review by the Revd. Robert Cox of 'The History of an Old Pocket Bible, as relate by itself', *Methodist Magazine* 37 (1814), 346.
16. Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (Hist. MSS. Com.) 78, *Hastings* iii, pp. 26 (28 Nov. 1739), 27 (26 Dec. 1739).
17. G.V. Bennett, 'University, Society and Church', in *History of the University of Oxford*, ed. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell, v, *The Eighteenth Century* (1986), 68.
18. Edward Harley (1689–1741) was known as Edward, Lord Harley from his father's elevation to the peerage in 1711 until he succeeded as 2nd earl of Oxford in 1714.
19. B.L. Add. MS. 70373, f. 78: Benson to Edward, Lord Harley, 20 Feb. 1717.
20. Brampton Bryan MSS, bundle x, quoted in *Tory and Whig: The Parliamentary Papers of Edward Harley, 3rd earl of Oxford, and William Hay, M.P. for Seaford*, ed. S. Taylor and C. Jones (1998). The Brampton Bryan MSS. are a group of documents of Edward Harley, 3rd earl of Oxford, at the Harley home at Brampton Bryan in Herefordshire.
21. Hist. MSS. Com. 29, *15th Rep. IV, Portland* vii, p. 191: Stratford to Edward, Lord Harley, 1 July 1714.
22. B.L. Add. MS. 70373, f. 80: Benson to Edward, Lord Harley, 6 Nov. 1717.
23. *Ibid.* Add. MS. 34733, ff. 55, 112, 122; Add. MS. 39311, f. 65.
24. Catherine Talbot is best remembered for her letters, published in 1809: *D.N.B.*
25. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, ff. 76, 85, 94.

26. A notebook in Benson's hand entitled 'Account of a Parochial Visitation of the Archdeaconry of Berkshire' includes brief accounts of patrons, incumbents, values of livings and related matters, but is mainly concerned with defects in the fabric and furnishings of churches, which are closely observed and recorded: Berkshire Record Office, R/D 80/17. Miss Sabina Sutherland has kindly drawn my attention to this previously uncatalogued item.
27. B.L. Add. MS. 32964, f. 226: Newcastle to Conybeare, 6 Dec. 1764.
28. *The Autobiography of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J.S. Macauley and R.W. Greaves (1988), ff. 16–17 (1726).
29. J.C. Shuler, 'The pastoral and ecclesiastical administration of the diocese of Durham 1721–1771' (University of Durham Ph.D thesis, 1976), 149. Benson was certainly out of the country in the autumn of 1732: B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 23.
30. Gloucester Cathedral Library, Chapter Act Book 2, f. 152 (30 Nov. 1738).
31. In 1746 his arrival at Gloucester was delayed 'partly by friends, partly by the floods' (B.L. Add. MS. 5841, f. 72: William Cole's transcript of Benson to Browne Willis, 22 Nov. 1746). He was still in County Durham on 26 Oct. 1746 when he consecrated a chapel in the parish of Houghton-le-Spring: Gloucester Diocesan Records in the Gloucestershire Record Office (G.D.R.), 393A.
32. *Autobiography of Secker*, f. 18 (1728–30).
33. Letter of Benson, probably written to Berkeley in 1745, quoted by Martin E. Benson, 'Memoir of Dr. Martin Benson'.
34. Browne Willis was a second cousin of Benson. Famous as an eccentric, he was a prolific though inaccurate writer on antiquarian topics, and produced successive editions in 1753 and 1763 of Ecton's *Liber Valorum et Decimarum*. See *D.N.B.*; J.G. Jenkins, *The Dragon of Whaddon* (1953).
35. B.L. Add. MS. 5836, f. 9 (Cole MSS.). William Cole the antiquary was a successor of Benson in the living of Bletchley from 1752 to 1767. Although he held Benson in great esteem he gave a disparaging account of what Benson had done for the furnishing of the parsonage house and the repair of the churchyard in comparison with his own achievements: *ibid.* Add. MS. 5830, f. 94.
36. *Ibid.* Add. MS. 5841, f. 48: Cole's transcript of Benson to Browne Willis, 26 Dec. 1734.
37. *Ibid.* f. 72: Cole's transcript of Benson to John Willis, 20 Jan. 1736.
38. Hist. MSS. Com. 78, *Hastings* iii, p. 20: Benson to the earl of Huntingdon, 13 July 1737.
39. *Ibid.* 29, *15th Rep. IV, Portland* vii, p. 322: Stratford to Edward, Lord Harley, 26 Apr. 1722. Stratford's strictures notwithstanding, the MS. of Benson's charge of 1722 contains nothing politically contentious.
40. C.H. Firth, 'Modern History in Oxford', *English Historical Review* 32 (1917), 1.
41. Benson was on the Continent at least once after the end of his Grand Tour, when he was at Liège in July 1732: B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 23: Benson to Secker; *Autobiography of Secker*, f. 19 (1730–32).
42. P.R.O., SP 35/50/8: Townshend to Gibson, 4 June 1724.
43. A.A. Luce, *The Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (1949), 103.
44. *Idem*, 'A new Berkeley letter and its endorsement', *Proc. Royal Irish Academy* 51 (1945–8), sect. C, 85.
45. Hist. MSS. Com. 6, *7th report, Appendix*, p. 243: Berkeley to Perceval, 20 July 1730.
46. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 12: Benson to Berkeley, 23 June 1729.
47. Hist. MSS. Com. 63, *Egmont Diary* i, p. 157 (10 Mar. 1731).
48. *Ibid.* ii, p. 371 (16 Mar. 1737).
49. *Ibid.* ii, p. 379 (30 Mar. 1737).
50. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 135.
51. Benson to Dr. Samuel Johnson, 9 Mar. 1736, quoted in A.L. Cross, *The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies* (1902), 106.
52. e.g. J. Nichols, *Illustrations to the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century* (1817–58), iii, 478 n.
53. Cf. Lord Hervey, *Memoirs of the Reign of George II from his accession to the death of Queen Caroline*, ed. J.W. Croker (1848), i, 417.
54. Hist. MSS. Com. 63, *Egmont Diary* ii, p. 137 (25 Dec. 1734).
55. *Autobiography of Secker*, f. 22, (1734–6).
56. B.L. Add. MS. 5841, f. 48

57. According to Egmont (Hist. MSS. Com **63**, *Egmont diary* ii, 137) Benson had previously asked for the deanery of Carlisle but been disappointed.
58. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Gibson papers no. 24: Benson to Gibson, 23 July 1736: '... if anything should be moved [by the ministry] that one should not approve of, it will be a comfort to be at liberty to oppose it. And in order to preserve this liberty, I shall be careful to banish any desire and thought from moving from the place I am in'. I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Taylor of the University of Reading for this reference.
59. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 35: Benson to Berkeley, 1 Apr. 1737.
60. Hist. MSS. Com. **78**, *Hastings* iii, p. 20: Benson to the earl of Huntingdon, 14 July 1737.
61. 'A List of the Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, and Prebendaries in England and Wales, in His Majesty's Gift, with the reputed Yearly Value of their respective Dignities, 1762', in *Correspondence of K. George III*, ed. Sir J. Fortescue (1927), i, 33.
62. B.L. Add. MS. 34733, f. 112: Benson to J. West, 5 July 1740.
63. Ibid. MS. 39311, f. 39: Benson to Berkeley, 7 Feb. 1738.
64. *Jnls. of the House of Lords* **24-7**, *passim*.
65. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 94.
66. *Jnls. of the House of Commons* **21**, 650 (24 Feb. 1731).
67. *Lords Jnls.* **24**, 545 (7 May 1735).
68. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 29: Benson to Berkeley, 13 May 1735.
69. *Lords Jnls.* **24**, 671: W. Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England* ix, 1179 (12 May 1736).
70. *Autobiography of Secker*, f. 31 (1742).
71. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 49 (23 Apr. 1743).
72. Hist. MSS. Com. **38**, *14th Rep.*, *Appendix* ix, p. 244: Francis Hare, bishop of Chichester, to his son, 14 Mar. 1739.
73. *Lords Jnls.* **25**, 307; *Parliamentary Hist.* x, 1091 (1 Mar. 1739).
74. *Lords Jnls.* **25**, 577; *Parliamentary Hist.* xi, 1015, 1018 (28 Jan. 1741).
75. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Gibson papers no. 24.
76. B.L. Add. MS. 32722, f. 223: Newcastle to Pelham, 3 Sept. 1750.
77. *Lords Jnls.* **26**, 205; *Parliamentary Hist.* xii, 1191 (15 Feb. 1743).
78. *Lord Jnls.* **26**, 195; *Parliamentary Hist.* xii, 1058 (1 Feb. 1743).
79. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 49: Benson to Berkeley, 23 Apr. 1743.
80. *Autobiography of Secker*, f. 34 (1743-4).
81. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 65: Benson to Berkeley, 18 Feb. 1752.
82. Ibid. Add. MS. 39313, f. 76: charge of 1722.
83. N. Sykes, *Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century* (1934), 120, illustrates Benson's practice from G.D.R. 284C (since lost): 'ordinations, licences and institutions, 1736-1741'. Benson's practice is also clear in G.D.R. 282A: subscription book 1731-71.
84. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 102: charge of 1735.
85. G.D.R. 282A, p. 138.
86. Shuler, 'Administration of Durham diocese', 107, 149.
87. *D.N.B.*, s.v. Benson.
88. 'Early Methodism and dignitaries of the established church: Martin Benson, bishop of Gloucester', *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* **21** (1875), 982.
89. *The Works of the Rev. George Whitefield* (1771), i, 18.
90. Printed in G. Lipscombe, *History and antiquities of the County of Buckingham* (1847), iv, 22 n.
91. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 45.
92. *Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns, 1743*, ed. S.L. Ollard and P.C. Walker (Yorkshire Archaeological Society **71**, 1928), p. xiv.
93. Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl. J. 4°. 2. f. 182.
94. George Leigh to Thomas Hayter, archdeacon of York, 12 Oct. 1737, quoted in S.L. Ollard, *Confirmation or the laying on of hands* (1927), i, 199.
95. Cf. G.D.R. 393A, Bishop Benson's consecration book: 'Consecrated Friday September 9th 1737 for the archbishop of York the chapel of Ripponham and chapel yard in the parish of Halifax and county of York'.

96. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 85.
97. An example of his use of rural deans survives in his correspondence with Joseph Harrison, rural dean of Cirencester, about the rebuilding of the chancel of North Cerney church: Bodleian Library, MS. Top. Glouc. C6, ff. 56 (8 Apr. 1736), 57 (26 Apr. 1736).
98. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, ff. 102, 113, 122, 135, 162.
99. A volume of 1735 listing 'the names of parishes which have an account of terriers and charitable gifts in the registry' (G.D.R. 285B(2)) was annotated by Benson with notes on charities, endowments and other gifts. These annotations were transcribed, with additions, into a notebook in Benson's hand entitled 'Places of which there are no terriers in the Register's office' (G.D.R. 287A).
100. Notes on the incidence of services in churches and chapels were recorded in Benson's 'diocese book': *Bishop Benson's Survey of the diocese of Gloucester 1735–1750* ed. J. Fendley (B.G.A.S., Gloucestershire Record Series 13, 2000). Fewer than one half of the returns reported 'full services'. These data were considered to be still sufficiently relevant to be recorded in a diocesan visitation book of c. 1825 (G.D.R. 383), suggesting that little advance had meanwhile been made towards Benson's goal.
101. 'An Act for the better maintenance of curates within the Church of England': 12 Anne St. II c. 12 (1713). The range of stipend was from £20 to £50 a year.
102. Benson's interrogation of the churchwardens on this matter was scrupulous: 'is he [the incumbent] resident upon his benefice? Or if not hath he a licensed curate well qualified to supply his place residing upon the same? Doth he hold another living by dispensation? If he does, doth he according to the express conditions of his dispensation reside continually upon the one or the other of them, and doth he on that, on which he resides the less, reside at least two months, and at it preach thirteen sermons in the year, exercising hospitality and works of charity there? And during the time he is absent from either, is there a resident curate to supply his place?': *Articles of visitation and inquiry . . . at the fifth triennial visitation by Martin, Lord Bishop . . .*, printed by R. Raikes, Gloucester, 1750.
103. *Bishop Benson's Survey*, ed. Fendley.
104. Cf. *V.C.H. Glos.* 7, 27, 32, 39.
105. A list of thirty-four 'small tracts' was attached to the printed text of Benson's articles of enquiry of 1750.
106. John Benson was described by Cole as 'an odd whimsical sort of man . . . who had lodgings . . . at Hackney, who had a place in the customs': B.L. Add. MS. 5836, f. 9.
107. Gloucester Cathedral Library, Chapter Act Book 2, f. 144 (22 July 1737).
108. *Ibid.* f. 152 (30 Nov. 1738). The forfeitures found specific uses. In 1743, £33 10s. from Atwell and £33 10s. from Salter were directed to 'washing the roof and the sides of the Lady Chapel, painting the choir and repairing the pinnacles on the south side and west end of the church'. The forfeitures recorded in the Chapter Act Books totalled £230. None was recorded after 1745.
109. *Ibid.* 3, f. 1 (undated).
110. *Ibid.* f. 54 (8 Mar. 1750).
111. *Ibid.* f. 56 (28 Dec. 1751); G.D.R. H3/1, the formal instrument of suspension.
112. *Review of Life and Character of Secker*, p. xxiii.
113. The surviving volumes are identified in S.M. Eward, *A Catalogue of Gloucester Cathedral Library* (1972), *passim*.
114. Gloucester Cathedral Library, shelf number 5.9.82. Cf. Eward, *Catalogue*, s.v. Versailles. A note in Benson's hand shows that he paid £20 for it in Paris.
115. An account of the antiquities of the isle of Thanet by John Batteley, archdeacon of Canterbury (d. 1709), first published in 1711.
116. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, numismatic archives: Arch. Bodl. fol. 4, f. 155.
117. Gloucester Cathedral Library, shelf number 5.9.56: 'Ex dono honorabissime Domini Thomae Baronis de Lempster'.
118. B.L. Add. MS. 5836, f. 9.
119. Knightley Chetwood, dean of Gloucester 1707–19, carried out extensive work on the choir, to which Benson added little: D. Welander, *The History, Art and Architecture of Gloucester Cathedral* (1992), 392, 401.

120. Canon Welander concluded that since there were no references to expenditures on these works in the treasurer's accounts or the chapter act books Benson bore the entire cost himself: *Gloucester Cathedral*, 409. Another source of income arose when legislation ended the obligation of the dean and chapter to direct £20 a year to the repairing of roads and bridges. Benson directed that it should thereafter go to 'public works for the honour and glory of the church'.
121. Cf. M. Jourdain, *The Work of William Kent* (1948); *D.N.B.*
122. Gloucester Cathedral Library, shelf number 5.9.73: 'Ex dono honorabilissime Comitis Burlington'.
123. Letter of September 1753, quoted in Jourdain, *William Kent*, 49.
124. T. Cocke, 'William Kent and Gloucester Cathedral', *Country Life*, 31 Dec. 1981. See also Bradbury, 'Overlooked Aspects of the 18th-Century Bishop's palace at Gloucester', *Trans. B.G.A.S.* **118** (2000), 157.
125. J. Dallaway, *Discourses upon Architecture in England* (1833), 190 n.
126. Idem, *Observations of English Architecture* (1806), 78 n.
127. Catherine Talbot to the Hon. Miss Campbell, 2 Jan. 1739, quoted in Nichols, *Illustrations*, vi, 205.
128. *Letters of Spencer Cowper, dean of Durham 1746–1774*, ed. E. Hughes (Publications of the Surtees Society **145**, 1950), 61.
129. Leigh to Hayter, quoted in Ollard, *Confirmation*, i, 199.
130. B.L. Add. MS. 5836, f. 10.
131. *D.N.B.*, apparently following A.C. Frazer, *Life and Works of Bishop Berkeley* (1871), iv, 339 n, wrongly refers to Benson as married to Secker's sister.
132. Cole evidently overlooked Benson's attendance at the House of Lords.
133. *Review of the Life and Character of Secker*, p. xxiii.
134. Secker to Berkeley, 1 Feb. 1735, quoted in Frazer, *Berkeley*.
135. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 37: Secker to an unidentified recipient, 29 June 1737.
136. *A Series of Letters between Mrs Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot* (1809), i, 37 (5 Oct. 1743).
137. B.L. Add. MS. 5836, f. 9.
138. The casualties appear to have mounted to one broken arm: *Gentleman's Magazine* **20** (1750), 89.
139. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 65: Benson to Berkeley, 18 Feb. 1752.
140. Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1373, f. 3: Benson to Secker, 8 June 1752.
141. *Ibid.* f. 9: Benson to Secker, 17 June 1752.
142. The latest entry in the list prefixed to Benson's confirmation sermon (B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 45) refers to a confirmation at Todenham, near the north-eastern boundary of the diocese, on 14 June 1752.
143. *Autobiography of Secker*, f. 44 (1752).
144. Gabriel Hanger of Driffield, later 1st earl of Coleraine. The epitaph that he composed (*Bishop Benson's Survey*, ed. Fendley, p. 172) is inscribed on an ornate monument now in the south triforium gallery of the cathedral which displays a medallion portrait of Benson and his armorial bearings. That monument, which is illustrated and discussed in Bradbury 'Overlooked Aspects', 165–8, is attributed to the sculptor (Sir) Robert Taylor: information from Sir Howard Colvin, of St. John's College, Oxford.
145. B.L. Add. MS. 39313, f. 45.
146. *Ibid.* f. 1.
147. Extracts from the contemporary literature are given in J. Jones, *Free and Candid Disquisitions relating to the Church of England, and the means of advancing Religion therein* (1749).
148. Hist. MSS. Com. **63**, *Egmont diary* ii, 470 (15 Mar. 1738).
149. B.L. Add. MS. 39311, f. 139: Samuel Glasse to Berkeley, 16 Aug. 1763. For Glasse and his associations with the diocese of Gloucester see *D.N.B.*
150. *A preservative against popery, in several select discourses upon the principal heads of controversy between Protestants and Papists, written and published by the most eminent divines of the Church of England...*, ed. E. Gibson (1738).
151. *Correspondence of Thomas Secker, bishop of Oxford 1737–1758*, ed. A.P. Jenkins (Oxfordshire Record Society **57**, 1991), 100.
152. G.V. Bennett, 'University, Society and Church', 360.

153. 'By Gad, this rogue of a vicar does not deserve to live, and yet he has two livings worth £400 per annum, while poor I am fain to do all his drudgery, and ride twenty miles every Sunday to preach, and for what? Why, truly for £20 a year': T. Smollett, *Roderick Random*, ch. ix, quoted by J.R.H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* (1953).
154. *Bishop Benson's Survey*, ed. Fendley, s.v. Winchcombe.
155. *Ibid.* s.v. North Nibley.
156. Gloucestershire Record Office, P 49/IN 4/1.
157. C.J. Abbey, *The English Church and its Bishops 1700–1800* (1887), ii, 62.
158. *The Times*, 19 Apr. 1864, quoted in O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church 1860–1901* (1972), 186.