

John Russell (1745-1806) and the Impact of Evangelicalism  
and Natural Theology on Artistic Practice

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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## Abstract

### John Russell (1745-1806) and the Impact of Evangelicalism and Natural Theology on Artistic Practice

Antje Matthews

During his lifetime, John Russell's (1745-1806) pastel portraits and fancy pictures were exceedingly popular with his London clientele. However, this contemporary popularity contrasts with the pronounced lack of interest in Russell's work as an art historical subject. This failure to recognise the contemporary importance of Russell's paintings is due firstly to the prejudice displayed by some researchers towards Russell's convicted Methodism and, secondly, to their dismissal of his work as over-emotional, low art. Equally, the more private part of Russell's work, his astronomical studies and moon pastels, have not been considered by art historians before.

This thesis attempts to reconstruct why and how Russell's images were so successful with late eighteenth-century British society. In order to do this, the seemingly unconnected aspects of the painter's oeuvre are considered in their entirety for the first time. This approach further draws on previously ignored private sources, such as the artist's diaries, which reveal the central role of Methodism in his work.

The thesis is based on an extensive review of the painter's place among Evangelicals and of the role which Evangelical culture played within society. It is shown that Russell's Methodism, far from being socially unacceptable, was reconcilable with conservatism and aided the painter's integration. The influence of Evangelical thought on his oeuvre is investigated through fancy pictures, portraits, and his images of natural philosophy, all of which reflect the painter's conviction that God was visible in every object. Russell's art, therefore, can be seen as one continuous act of devotion.

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## Abbreviations

A&G	<i>Astronomy and Geophysics</i>
ALBUM	<i>The complete Collection of Russell's Drawings from the Moon</i> , OMS
BL	British Library
BM	British Museum
BMAG	Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
CAM	Cambridge University Library
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
DSB	<i>Dictionary of Scientific Biography</i>
EM	<i>Evangelical Magazine</i>
FD	<i>Joseph Farington's Diary</i>
Fig./Figs.	Figure/Figures
GHG	Guildford House Gallery
HOR	Letter from John Russell to Thomas Hornsby, 19 February 1789, as quoted in Stone, 1895
LP	<i>Lunar Planispheres</i>
MNRAS	<i>Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society</i>
MS	Manuscript
NAL	National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
NG	National Gallery, London
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
NPG	National Portrait Gallery, London
OMS	Museum of the History of Science, Oxford
RD	<i>John Russell's Diaries</i> , NAL
R.A.	Royal Academy of Arts, London
RAS	Royal Astronomical Society
RS	Royal Society
RSB	<i>John Russell's Sketchbooks</i> , BMAG
SciM	Science Museum, London
SJH	Smithsonian Journal of History

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# 1

## Introduction: Religious Art in the “Age of Reason”?

“The elegant Arts, of which Painting is one of the most considerable, have ever been held in the highest estimation by the Great and Illustrious of all Ages, not solely for private amusement, but for their beneficial influence in Society, in promoting benevolence, and inspiring delicacy of feeling.”

(Russell, *Elements of Painting*, 1777, p.i)

Amongst his contemporaries, John Russell (1745-1806) was renowned for his intensely colourful and emotional pastel portraits and fancy pictures. This appreciation, however, is in contrast to the lack of interest shown by art historians in Russell's work. By branding his images as "sentimental", they marginalised a painter for the very aspects of his art which had made him popular during his lifetime. This thesis is the first extensive study of John Russell's work since the late nineteenth century, and the first attempt to reconcile this discrepancy between primary and secondary sources.<sup>1</sup> This investigation leads, through an examination of Russell's manifold interests, to the conclusion that his strong Methodism exerted an overwhelming influence on his life and work. An understanding of religious influences on Russell's art reveals that, frequently, art historians have not taken religion into account when researching that painter's contemporary period.<sup>2</sup>

Though John Russell's name is little known today, contemporary newspapers reveal that he was then in much demand. As early as 1777, when Russell was still relatively unknown, the *St. James's Chronicle* published a sympathetic article describing Russell's pastels as "all very good" and as standing "the foremost in that Lane at present".<sup>3</sup> This positive criticism continued throughout the 1780s and 1790s. *The World* announced in spring 1790, "Russell's charming Crayons will make one of the first ornaments" in the forthcoming Royal Academy exhibition. "He now has to boast a superiority to any thing that was ever done in this country before."<sup>4</sup> Two weeks later the same paper reported that "Russell, the charming Crayon Painter, has what every amateur will be rejoiced to hear, twenty-two Pictures in the exhibition".<sup>5</sup> *The Times* boasted that Russell did not have to exhibit very many pictures "to maintain his character, as the first crayon painter in the country."<sup>6</sup> His works fetched prices that competed with those Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) charged for his fashionable portraits.<sup>7</sup> In this climate of widespread approval Russell was made "Crayon Painter to his Majesty, and to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales" in 1788. The royal commissions had begun in 1789 under the patronage of George III,

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<sup>1</sup> The main secondary sources on Russell are Williamson, 1894; C. Monkhouse: John Russell, in: DNB, Vol.xlix, London, 1897, pp.452-454; See, 1911; Stone, 1895; Ryan, 1966; Rhodes, 1986; Olson and Pasachoff, 1998, esp. pp.78, 106; *ibid.*, 2001, esp. pp.334-336.

<sup>2</sup> Pears, 1988, pp.41-43; Dillenberger, 1977, pp.36-37.

<sup>3</sup> *St. James's Chronicle*, 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> May 1777, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> *The World*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1790, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1790, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1790, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Judges, 1895, p.66.

who had ordered Russell to paint the king's famous physician, Dr. Willis (1789) (fig.1). This modest image shows the doctor in a simple brown coat, without a wig, holding a small book. The portrait was an instant success with the public, who were able to see the pastel at the Royal Academy. At the closing of the exhibition, the *St. James's Chronicle* advertised an engraving "from the much admired Picture painted by J. RUSSELL, R.A." on its front page, and announced that it would be published "speedily". Russell continued to be employed by the Royal Family, portraying the future George IV (fig.2), the Prince's family, and curious acquaintances such as the Prince's personal favourites, the Brighton bathers John Miles and Martha Gunn (figs. 3, 4).<sup>8</sup> Prints after Russell's paintings were widespread, appearing in Nonconformist as well as worldly magazines, and played their part in the acquainting of the public with the famous faces of the time.<sup>9</sup>

Despite their popularity during the painter's lifetime, "Russell's charming crayons" have not attracted much attention since his death in 1806. This is mainly because later generations ignored the religious dimension of Russell's work and therefore did not understand his art. Art historians who have come across Russell have often taken fright at the painter's Evangelicalism. Even the most sympathetic critic regarded Russell's Methodist convictions as being at odds with the painter's contemporary success.<sup>10</sup> In 1915, *The Keep*, quarterly magazine of the Guildford Institute, published the following summary of the artist's desire to convert his fellow men and women.

"Russell was a man of tremendous energy, as is proved by the amount of work crammed into a life of moderate length. Surely, his passion for "doing" had something to do with his unwise efforts to force his own religious views on all persons."<sup>11</sup>

The widespread prejudice that Methodism was socially unacceptable, influenced authors on Russell throughout the twentieth century. As recently as 1998, Martin Postle, in the catalogue of the exhibition *Angels and Urchins*, copied the traditional

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<sup>8</sup> Williamson's collection of photos of Russell's works in Guildford contains photos of Russell's portraits of George III (c.1775), Princess Augusta Sophia (1779), and the Prince Regent's wife.

<sup>9</sup> Between 1782 and 1826, some portraits from Russell's hand appeared in the *European Magazine*, e.g. the portraits of Mrs. Inchbald (Vol.13, 1788), Dr. Thornton (Vol.44, 1803), William Wilberforce (Vol.66, 1814), and John Bacon Jun. (Vol.67, 1815).

<sup>10</sup> Williamson, 1894.

<sup>11</sup> Elsley, 1915.

polemic describing Russell as “a curious character.” He further informs the reader “that Russell was an absolute pain, inflicting his religious mania on his master and upon sitters alike. Yet [!], he attracted numerous fashionable patrons”.<sup>12</sup> The author implies that Russell’s success is surprising considering the artist’s alleged religious excesses. This view, however, is based on a prejudiced handling of the primary sources, a careful study of which shows that most contemporaries did not consider Russell as an Evangelical maniac.

In his textbook *Elements of Painting* Russell made a clear statement on the purpose of art as he saw it. He wrote,

“The elegant Arts, of which Painting is one of the most considerable, have ever been held in the highest estimation by the Great and Illustrious of all Ages, not solely for private amusement, but for their beneficial influence in Society, in promoting benevolence, and inspiring delicacy of feeling”.<sup>13</sup>

This attitude is not solely motivated by the artist’s civil obligations as a citizen. As this thesis attempts to show, Russell’s religious convictions were in tune with his contemporary world. To this artist, art and religion were by no means opposites. When asked to give up painting in order to become a preacher, Russell did not hesitate to dismiss this suggestion. In his diary he justified his decision, writing, “I am apprehensive I can have an opportunity of doing more good in the way I am in ever since I have been awakened.”<sup>14</sup> For Russell, painting was the most effective way of spreading God’s message. He was a religious painter who used his art in a way that was successful with his contemporaries, but which later generations did not understand.

Religion has not been recognised as the key to Russell’s art. This is due to the fact that British Enlightenment scholarship traditionally focused on the secular aspects of its research topics.<sup>15</sup> This neglect of religion originated from the concept of the Enlightenment as the beginning of modernity, and the conviction that

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<sup>12</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, p.89.

<sup>13</sup> Russell, 1777, p.i.

<sup>14</sup> RD, Vol. 2, p.185, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1768.

<sup>15</sup> Barnett, 2003, p.1.

modernity was, at its heart, antireligious.<sup>16</sup> Peter Gay, in his influential work *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, and particularly in its first volume, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*, initiated the notion of the secular ‘Enlightenment’ of the mind.<sup>17</sup> Numerous historians and art historians adopted this generalised approach. For example John Barrell maintained that art was a worldly and public affair, stating that during much of the eighteenth century “the discourse of ‘civic humanism’, of aristocratic and republican virtue, had been the most influential and the most fully articulated language of value”.<sup>18</sup> Applying the theories of ‘civic humanism’ to art, he conjured a vision of Russell’s contemporary society that appeared more antireligious than primary sources suggest. He saw man “as a political animal” who was “destined to find fulfilment as the citizen of a republic in which he was both ruler and ruled.”<sup>19</sup> Art itself, Barrell states, “was understood to be structured as a political republic” and he concludes, “the most dignified function to which painting could aspire was the promotion of the public virtues”.<sup>20</sup>

For some time, scholars such as Roy Porter, David Sorkin, and Stephen J. Barnett have challenged this vision of political and irreligious Enlightenment art.<sup>21</sup> They explored the extent to which previous Enlightenment scholarship had taken local particularities into account. This led them to challenge the simplifications which Gay had introduced in the 1960s, and to reject Barrell’s universally secular vision of eighteenth-century society.<sup>22</sup> Porter scrutinised late eighteenth-century religious concerns, establishing that Russell’s contemporaries were certainly interested in the requirements which God might have of mankind.<sup>23</sup> Religious concerns, it appeared, were more important than the advocates of ‘civic humanism’

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>17</sup> K. Haakonssen, introduction to *Enlightenment and Religion. Rational Dissent in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain*, 1996, p.i.

<sup>18</sup> Barrell, 1992, p.xiv (FN1). Barrell derived the notion of ‘civic humanism’ from J.G.A. Pocock’s *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975). Barrell, 1986, pp.1-13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1992, p.xiv.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1986, pp.1, 221.

<sup>21</sup> Porter, 2000, pp.96-129; Sorkin, 2002, pp.5-21; Barnett, 2003, pp.1-10.

<sup>22</sup> Haakonssen, 1996, p.i, refers to Roy Porter and M. Teich, eds.: *The Enlightenment in National Context*, 1981, and to S. Juetner and J. Schlobach, (eds.), “Europäische Aufklärung(en). Einheit und nationale Vielheit“, in: *Studien zum 18. Jahrhundert*, 14 (Hamburg, 1992). The problem of the influence of the historian’s contemporary philosophies on his view of the past has been treated, e.g. in Q. Skinner: “Meaning and understanding in the History of Ideas”, in: *History and Theory* (8, 1969) and Barnett, 2003, pp.1-10.

<sup>23</sup> Porter, 2000, p.96.

acknowledged. Indeed, in agreement with Porter, Sorkin states that the English Enlightenment was inseparable from the Protestant establishment.<sup>24</sup>

The antireligious reputation of British art originates from Henry VIII's attack on Catholicism through the destruction of the monasteries. This demonstration of royal independence from Rome not only transformed religion in Britain, but also affected religious art.<sup>25</sup> Paintings in churches were associated with Catholicism and were therefore unpopular.<sup>26</sup> British culture became dominated by literature, and, particularly during the Puritan seventeenth century, texts often replaced visual images. In the 1630s, William Perkins expressed the widespread religious iconoclasm by stating that it would be better if the "knowledge of Christ's agony and crucifixion was to be transmitted not through dead art but", amongst other things, "through living words".<sup>27</sup> However, alongside the iconoclasts, there were those who argued the opposite, that images were not necessarily evil, and indeed that the visual arts were indispensable. As early as 1669, Alexander Browne's *Ars Pictoria* proclaimed the positive potential of church art for the guidance of the Christian.

"We know no form of Angels but from Paint,  
Nor difference make of Devil, or of Saint,...  
T'is then hop'd by the Painter at the least  
He may assistant be unto the Priest."<sup>28</sup>

This trend continued in the eighteenth century. William Hole, with *The Ornaments of Churches considered* (1761), attempted to prove that the placing of pictures in churches was not an offence in the eyes of God. Despite the Puritan suspicion of art, the notion that paintings were not necessarily bad, and that the effect of a painting depended upon the personal attitude of the viewer, grew stronger.

Under the patronage of George III., religious history painting attempted a tentative comeback in the late eighteenth century. The king commissioned Benjamin West (1738-1820) to paint the "Progress of Revealed Religion", which was to be

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<sup>24</sup> Sorkin, 2002, pp.5-6; Bebbington, 1989, p.20.

<sup>25</sup> Paulson, 1989, p.15.

<sup>26</sup> Dillenberger, 1977, pp.36-37.

<sup>27</sup> Paulson, 1989, pp.16-17, 32. The quote is by Perkins, from his *Works*, 2.222-23, quoted by Phillips, 1973, p.174. Asfour and Williamson, 1999, p.23.

<sup>28</sup> The poem is signed J.H. and P. Fisher. Browne, 1669, p.237.

executed for a new Royal Chapel at Windsor. This was the most ambitious British historical cycle of the century, but it was never finished. Nevertheless, West called the extensive sketches for this project the “great work of my life”.<sup>29</sup> Whether the artist perceived of the task as a religious exercise, or whether he recognised the promise which large religious images held for a history painter, religious themes were seminal to West’s oeuvre, making up around half of his production. However, John Dillenberger claimed that West’s religious paintings “have received scant attention”,<sup>30</sup> and he continues by saying that an understanding of West’s religious images could only be reached through an examination of “the religious-historical context in which West’s English commissions occurred”.<sup>31</sup>

Outside of churches Biblical topics, such as the Deluge, were popular in history painting. During the last two decades of the eighteenth century, versions of this theme by, among others, Maria Cosway (1785), Philippe de Loutherbourg (1790), Benjamin West (1791), and Henry Fuseli (1799), were on show in London.<sup>32</sup> Besides such epic themes, less grand religious topics also became increasingly popular in eighteenth-century Britain. An example is West’s “Suffer the Little Children”, which he painted as an illustration for the Macklin Bible in the 1790s. The painting was later bought for the Foundling Hospital, where it preached to its viewers of children’s relative innocence and their closeness to heaven.<sup>33</sup> Addressing related Christian values, West’s “The Infant St. John” (c.1781) proved exceedingly popular as an engraving.<sup>34</sup> Along with other important painters of his time, Russell produced numerous examples of this gentle, religious genre, which was essentially middle class in scope.

If religion was seminal to Benjamin West, it was even more important to John Bacon (1740-99), Russell’s close friend and fellow Methodist. Bacon’s biographer, the Rev. Cecil, recorded the sculptor’s Christian outlook on his profession, and asked him why he did not choose to be a churchman rather than an artist. The latter, Cecil argued, served volatile fashion rather than the eternal truth of God.

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<sup>29</sup> Quote from a letter draft to H. Rowland, dated 25 may 1811 interleaved in folio, ed. John Galt: *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West* (London, 1820); quoted in Pressly, 1983, p.15.

<sup>30</sup> Dillenberger, 1977, p.ix.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Pressly, 1983, p.27.

<sup>33</sup> Dillenberger, 1977, pp.98-99. See also Erffa, 1986, p.340.

<sup>34</sup> Erffa, 1986, pp.322-323.

“ ‘Upon what principle then’ said I [Cecil] to him [Bacon], ‘do you continually labour to meet the taste of such sickly wanderers?’ – ‘I consider’ said he ‘that profession in which I am providentially placed, and prosperously and honourably succeed, to be as lawful as any other that is not concerned in furnishing the necessities of life; besides which part of it, especially the monumental, may be employed to an important, moral purpose; but the truth is, if the work itself be innocent, the workman I hope is not accountable for the abuse made of it; and as the world will have not only its necessities, I may as well be the toy-man as any other.’”<sup>35</sup>

Bacon thought that, as a “toy-man”, he could still serve a moral purpose. His sculptures frequently display Christian values, such as benevolence and charity. E. Beresford Chancellor in his early twentieth-century *Lives of the British Sculptors* still lists Bacon’s open religiosity as a reason for his success. The sculptor, he writes, “was a man whose nature was essentially religious, and one who took no small pains to make this apparent in public, and in the form of fables and epitaphs and even sermons he indicated to all and sundry his devoutness and his uprightness of life.”<sup>36</sup> Benjamin West employed history painting for his “moral and teaching enterprise”.<sup>37</sup> Bacon pursued a similar aim with his reputedly predictable and straightforward symbolism, which differed from West’s approach, but made him immensely popular.<sup>38</sup>

Working with portraits and fancy pictures, Russell aimed to achieve the same goals as Bacon. He too regarded painting as a moral instructor of humankind, and considered it to be a medium sanctified for the teaching of God’s message by the Creator Himself.<sup>39</sup> Russell stated that a direct benefit of painting, “as in this age of dissipation”, was that it offered an alternative to those who “may prefer the silent amusement of a beautiful Art [i.e. pastel painting] to the delusive enchantments in the gay circles of unrestrained pleasure”.<sup>40</sup> This attitude is a long way from the Puritan rejection of visual imagery in favour of texts, and certainly does not fit with

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<sup>35</sup> Cecil, 1801, pp.93-94.

<sup>36</sup> Chancellor, 1911, p.190.

<sup>37</sup> Dillenberger, 1977, pp.11-12.

<sup>38</sup> Chancellor, 1911, pp.189, 204-205.

<sup>39</sup> Russell, 1777, p.i.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.iii.



the idea of an antireligious Enlightenment. An investigation of John Russell's art, which is to take the artist's socio-religious context into account, has to be based on a fresh examination of the contemporary sources.

In the case of John Russell, many such sources have survived, the most important being the manuscript volumes of the artist's diary. Russell recorded his private feelings and his state of mind with varying regularity, from 1766 until 1802.<sup>41</sup> The reliability and usefulness of such private self-reflection for historical research has been disputed.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, such diaries only provide a very unbalanced picture of the keeper's life, focussing on just a few aspects of a complex person. However, the passionate records of Russell's feelings are an invaluable source for any historian who attempts to understand the painter's religious views. The diaries describe Russell's portrait sittings with churchmen, the services he heard, and the preachers he met. Occasionally, the volumes also record matters of a non-religious nature, episodes in Russell's life, from household matters to the events at the Royal Academy. Twelve volumes of sketchbooks, containing drawings of antique statues, anatomical, landscape, botanical, and architectural themes, complement the diaries.<sup>43</sup> Beside these invaluable manuscripts and sketchbooks there exists a small collection of publications by Russell, which is informative about his opinions on art and natural philosophy and which contains numerous clues towards the inspiration behind his art. These primary sources, in combination with other contemporary material, enable the extent to which Russell's religious views influenced his art to be reconstructed.

The two areas of Russell's oeuvre which permit an examination of the relationship between his art and his religion are Sensibility and Natural Theology. Moral values such as virtue and benevolence, which feature in the literature of Sensibility, also feature in Russell's portraits and fancy pictures. Due to this overlap, Russell could preach the very values in which he personally believed in to a wide audience, through painting. Russell also expressed his religiosity through Natural Theology, the appreciation of divine Creation through empirical knowledge. An array of medical, anatomical, and astronomical images attests to the painter's involvement with natural philosophy. Russell repeatedly declared that he combined

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<sup>41</sup> See bibliography (p.208). Russell's own records are supplemented by a manuscript by John Bacon the younger (1777-1859), who remembered Russell as a close friend of his father's. Williamson heavily relied on this now untraceable manuscript in his biography of Russell.

<sup>42</sup> Hindmarsh, 1996, pp.221-222.

<sup>43</sup> See bibliography, p.209.

the empirical investigation of nature with religious reflections. Amal Asfour and Paul Williamson have shown similar tendencies in Gainsborough (1727-88), whose nonconformist background infused his early landscapes with Natural Theology.<sup>44</sup>

Sensibility and Natural Theology were seminal not only to Russell, but to the painter's contemporary society. Importantly, these two themes genuinely concerned non-Revivalists as well as Revivalists, furthering the integration of Evangelicals in society. The following investigation of Russell's work is based on the reconcilability of the artist's philosophy with contemporary society, which historians have often denied. The ensuing chapter is an attempt to recover the religious context of Russell's work by investigating the intertwined social and geographical network of the Evangelical Revival, in which Russell was socially and spiritually at home. It shows that Russell's Methodism did not hinder him from being a conservative and respected member of society, and indeed that the artist's religiosity strengthened his place in society. This preparatory analysis of Russell's background is followed by a detailed investigation of the influence of both Sensibility (chapter 3) and Natural Theology (chapters 4 and 5) on Russell's images. While this study is based on John Russell's life and work, it does not claim to be a comprehensive biography. Instead this thesis sets out to explore the manifold interactions between religion and art using one example in order to indicate the importance of this relation for the ongoing revision of late eighteenth-century art in Britain.

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<sup>44</sup> Asfour and Williamson, 1999, pp.25-30.

# 2

## Placing Russell within Religion and Society

“If men could understand through the increasing perfection of natural philosophy the complex nature and intentions of the First Cause, what power He has over men and what benefits they receive from Him, so their duty towards Him as well as towards one another would appear ‘by the light of nature’”

(Newton, *Opticks*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., London 1730, Book III, p.380, quoted in Everett, 1994, p.13)

## **A Life Shaped by Methodism**

John Russell could have become a preacher instead of a painter. When an angry crowd dispersed an open-air Methodist meeting at Mayfair on a summer's day in 1771, Russell placed himself in charge of the remaining congregation and "continued reasoning with 50 or 60 persons in the street" for two hours. He wrote that "several fell under the truth I was enabled to speak".<sup>45</sup> Russell, a passionate follower of the Calvinist Evangelical leader George Whitefield (1714-70), displayed the zeal and the talent of a preacher. Despite his lasting religious sincerity he never abandoned his art to become a professional preacher. When an attempt was made to recruit Russell as a preacher for the Evangelical Revival in 1768, the young painter found himself confronted with an opportunity to leave his painting career in order to "go to study at Lady Huntingdons school in Wales at a place call'd Trevecca".<sup>46</sup> Russell appears to have had little difficulty in deciding, as he furthermore reported, "the mention of the thing made me very uneasy as I can by no means think myself a proper person for a preacher." This decision against the ministry was not due to a lack of religious conviction but to his fear of vanity. Russell wrote,

"I have been tempted at times to think about turning to the ministry, when under a warmth of Soul but I have look'd on it as a Temptation from the Enemy. Lord God keep me from delusion and thinking of myself more than I ought to think."<sup>47</sup>

Instead of preaching in a field or from a pulpit, Russell pursued his "opportunity of doing more good"<sup>48</sup> as the leading British pastel painter of the late eighteenth century.

The "good" which Russell set out to do with images was indeed similar to that which he would have attempted by preaching. Religion was the centre of his life and it was the centre of his art. On the title page of his diary the artist drew a Calvary scene. This sketchy ink drawing of an open Bible, which is situated in front of a hill bearing three crosses, announces the beginning of Russell's lasting

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<sup>45</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.26, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1771.

<sup>46</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.24; RD, Vol.2, p.184, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1768.

<sup>47</sup> RD, Vol. 2, p.185, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1768.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

engagement with religion. The scene is inscribed, “John Russell Converted September 30. 1764. aetat. 19. about half an hour after 7 O’Clock in the Evening”.<sup>49</sup> Five years later, he commemorated the event and indicated its importance by writing, “This day five years ago was the day in which I was called out of darkness into God’s marvellous light, under the ministry of dear Mr. Madan at the Lock, where I went out of curiosity and ridicule.”<sup>50</sup> This comment is the only indication among the artist’s records that his conversion came suddenly, as it can be assumed that he would not have gone to “ridicule” the Methodists had he been sympathetic to them before. The outpouring of religious feelings which fills the first pages of his diary suggests that his early years as a Methodist had been a time of doubts about his newly adopted religion. However, by 1766 Russell had come to the conclusion that he was on the right path, writing,

“I do now Firmly & Steadfastly approve of my Choice, & do now decide myself unto thee afresh. I therefore unworthy wretch as I am do by thy Grace with my Hand my heart and my Pen (and let this Paper witness for me) Give my Soul my Body and my Spirit without any Reserve up unto thy divine Majestys Service...”<sup>51</sup>

Russell remained an assured Methodist until the end of his life and mentioned the anniversary of his conversion as late as 1801.<sup>52</sup> Russell was convinced that he lived in a state of sin, and throughout his life he often wrote down passionate prayers, begging God to deliver him from this state. This same conviction, which went so far that he considered himself unworthy to become a preacher, greatly influenced the artist’s character and life-style.

The strong religious opinions which Russell held throughout his adult life were not foreshadowed in his childhood. Born in 1745, he grew up as the oldest of seven children in provincial Guildford, which in the eighteenth century was a small market town of around two thousand inhabitants.<sup>53</sup> Sources on Russell from his childhood are rare. All that is known is that he went to the local Grammar School and once distinguished himself by climbing Holy Trinity church to make a chalk

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, title page, unnumbered, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1766.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Vol.3, p.130, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1769.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.2, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1766.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Vol.D, p.31, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1801.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander, 1986, pp.33, 55.

mark at the top of the tower.<sup>54</sup> The Russell family had lived in Guildford since 1509.<sup>55</sup> Several of the artist's ancestors had been mayors of Guildford. Indeed the artist's father, John Russell sen. (1711-1804), in addition to running a print and Bible shop, was the mayor of Guildford four times.<sup>56</sup> Surrounded by prints, Russell became acquainted with the Old Masters early on.<sup>57</sup> Doubtless, his father's production of panoramic engravings of Guildford and the surrounding countryside also furthered Russell's later career as an artist. In this climate, which was sympathetic to the arts, the young John Russell's talent was encouraged.

While Russell's artistic career was thus prepared for, the religious artefacts from the family's Bible shop did not appear to have had any notable spiritual impact on the young painter. Neither, indeed, did the Evangelical climate of Guildford leave a trace in Russell's religious beliefs at the time. Guildford was traditionally involved in the wool trade, which was linked with radical Protestantism. Even when the industrialisation of the later eighteenth century reoriented the town away from the wool trade towards corn production, Guildford remained a place open to dissenting influences. Among the town's churches during the mid eighteenth century were Presbyterian, Quaker, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, Baptist, and Methodist meeting places.<sup>58</sup> This, however, did not attract the young artist's interest and he remained religiously inconspicuous. Only when Russell moved to London in his mid-teens did he turn to Methodism.<sup>59</sup>

The most striking feature of Russell's religiosity is his unforgiving self-criticism, which resulted in, and in turn was fuelled by, continuous introspection and reflection. To live the life of a true Methodist meant for Russell to live the life of the mind, and to forsake worldly pleasures. He therefore fought against those influences which he considered harmful, whether from an external source or from what he called his "animal natural spirits".<sup>60</sup> One of the predominant themes in the diary is the artist's desperation at his confrontation with his mortal body, which he reviled as sinful. Throughout his life he never ceased to complain that his mind was teasing

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<sup>54</sup> Williamson, 1894, pp.6-7.

<sup>55</sup> Judges, 1895, p.69.

<sup>56</sup> Alexander, 1986, p.36.

<sup>57</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.7.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander, 1986, p.37. I am very grateful to M.A. for his advice. Russell, 1801, p.183.

<sup>59</sup> As the sources are sparse on Russell's apprenticeship, the exact year of his move to the capital is not known. Williamson, 1894, p.9, claims that Russell was practicing on his own account in 1767. This makes it likely that Russell had left Guildford during the early 1760s.

<sup>60</sup> RD, Vol.1, p.14, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1766; p.32, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1766; Vol.5, p.61, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1771.

him “by Running after creature comforts”.<sup>61</sup> He ordered himself to exercise “watchfull vigilance”,<sup>62</sup> otherwise “Lust Surely will Break out, your very constitution [...] will tempt you constantly and if you do not fly to Christ you will be in great danger of falling into the Commission of Actual Sin.” He urged himself, “Watch always!”, but he was not always strong enough to control himself and the entry continues, “I was brought into darkness by leaning to the flesh”.<sup>63</sup> On another occasion Russell noted in disgust, “how Vile and filthy a creature am I – amazing that God can be merciful to such a wretch”.<sup>64</sup> Coded reports of his daily torments indicate that he attempted to repress his own sexuality.<sup>65</sup> In an uncommonly explicit passage he confesses,

“last night I was sadly beset with inflameing [sic] dreams – all day I have been tempted with violent filthy imaginations – and at the academy this Evening I was most furiously attack’d by this terrible passion the subject of study being female.”<sup>66</sup>

That the artist never gave up his belief in God, and that he considered these worldly trials as necessary in becoming a better Christian, is most clearly expressed in his private notes from particularly bad periods. After the artist had married Hannah Faden (1745-1816) in 1770, the young family had to cope with great poverty and the deaths of four of their first five children. Russell wrote that he had no means to provide for his family, which resulted in him being “low in soul and body.”<sup>67</sup> This setting of poverty and desperation appears to have heightened the spiritual and mental crises that reappeared throughout the artist’s life.<sup>68</sup> Russell turned to God in hope, writing, “What signifies my being poor in this world if I am rich towards

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.31, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1766.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.8, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1771; Vol.5, p.9, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1771.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.13, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1766.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.39, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1771.

<sup>65</sup> Most pages of Russell’s diary contain unclear mentions of torments and temptations, e.g. “I awoke uneasy from a Sinful and Impure dream” (Vol.1, p.23, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1766), “I was greatly troubled and perplex’d with the unwelcome rising of a sensual passion” (Vol.1, p.34, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1766), “Lord keep all irregular passion down” (Vol.5, p.9, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1771), and “It certainly well deserves sorrow that our Nature is so corrupt as to maintain itself in sleep: but I think it an evidence of grace that the sleeping thoughts should be oppressed with pain from the supposition of actual transgression.” (Vol.D, p.6, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1801).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, pp.63-64, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1771.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.76, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1772.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.26, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1771. “A nervous disorder which has troubled me for several years past which I thought almost gone, has made me this day incapable of my business”.

God.”<sup>69</sup> Everything Russell did, he did in the name and in the service of his Creator. Conversely, after his condition had improved somewhat, on Christmas Day 1785 he wrote,

“I have trusted Him [God] though shamefully faint yet he has given me fulness & a seeming establishment. Oh that I may use to His glory & my family’s good what he is putting into my hands.”<sup>70</sup>

When Russell died, aged sixty-one, of typhus fever while travelling in the north of England, he was a worn-out man. Throughout his life he had been a practising Methodist, who shared the religious sincerity of the Evangelical Revival and who made religion the centre of his life. Russell was constantly fearful of being in a sinful state, which becomes clear in diary notes, such as when he requested of himself, “be humble my soul learn to know they Nothingness.”<sup>71</sup> He had constantly felt a need to punish himself for any deviation from the disciplined way of life with which he burdened himself. The artist’s emphasis on religion had a critical influence on the way he felt, thought, and acted, and which can hardly be overestimated when studying his art works.

While religion had an undeniable impact on Russell’s character, it also influenced his artistic career, his clientele, and his painting. One consequence of Russell’s religious conviction was his strict observance of the Sunday rest. While he generally worked hard and neglected rest and recovery, he never touched work on a Sabbath. The artist locked his studio to visitors and declined to receive even the most eminent guests, such as the Prince Regent who once, accompanied by a foreign ambassador, came to see Russell’s pastels on a Sunday.<sup>72</sup> In the late artist’s funeral sermon at St. Swithin’s, London, in 1806, the Rev. H. G. Watkins praised Russell’s insistence on the Sunday rest, saying, “In some trying incidences intimately connected with his profession, he has done himself and his Christian character the honour of endangering the loss of very high patronage”,<sup>73</sup> rather than dishonouring the Sunday. The diaries certify that Russell spent his Sundays in church, often

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Vol.6, p.41, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1773.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Vol.8, p.70, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1785.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.4, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1766; p.7, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1766.

<sup>72</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.31.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.84, quotes from Watkins’ funeral sermon.



visiting two or three services in one day. Among the London chapels which he most frequently visited were the Lock, the Tabernacle and St. Dunstan's.

The artist's religious zeal was not restricted to Sundays. Every day he filled his diaries with lengthy self criticisms,<sup>74</sup> and he became absorbed in writing "long allegorical Religious Letter[s]".<sup>75</sup> Further, Russell extensively expounded the Bible to his family,<sup>76</sup> preached to servants and travellers, and he preached at the Rev. Peckwell's Methodist society with particular zeal.<sup>77</sup> On the artist's frequent visits to his parental home in Guildford, this religious excitement was not welcomed. On one of his stays in 1768 his parents' antipathy towards Methodism burst into open confrontation. Russell recorded,

"My poor mother came up with me to-night when I went to bed, and charged me to say nothing about my religion to the servants or anybody here, which I absolutely refused to comply with, and answered the contrary [to which she] spoke dreadful blasphemous words against the Old Testament, on which I answered her most dreadfully severe, pronouncing bitter curses, denying her being a Christian as much as the Devil himself."<sup>78</sup>

When his father asked him to go for a walk with him in the fields on the following Sunday afternoon, Russell ostentatiously rejected the request with the excuse that he did not want to work on the Lord's Day. On the very next day, as if to underline the point, he "took a walk in the fields, reading, and singing hymns."<sup>79</sup> The quarrelling continued for years, but Russell's parents gradually warmed to Methodism. When the artist's father, sisters, and brothers stayed with him in London, he took them to services, introduced them to preachers, and expounded on the Bible to them.<sup>80</sup> In May 1775 Russell recorded his joy on learning that his father and several of the family went to hear Mr. Holms, a Methodist preacher. Russell wrote excitedly that

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<sup>74</sup> "For who is that child the Father chastens not...Thou mortal man remember Trials & affliction, are very necessary, therefore tho they may be chang'd..." (RD, Vol. 5, p.44, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1771).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.25, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1771.

<sup>76</sup> Russell expounded almost daily, e.g. RD, Vol. 5, p.53, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1771.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., Vol.6, p.165, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1772.

<sup>78</sup> Judges, 1895, p.68.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.55, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1771.

“the Ice seems broken” and he added his hopes that Methodism might flourish in Guildford, asking God to “graciously be pleas’d to send some minister to this place who shall be usefull.”<sup>81</sup>

One of the people who felt the impact of Russell’s missionary spirit particularly strongly was his teacher Francis Cotes (1726-70). While master and apprentice had great sympathy for each other, and Russell published his textbook *Elements of Painting* in honour and memory of his late master, they had disputes on the subject of religion. During the time of his apprenticeship in the early to mid-1760s, Russell lived at Cotes’ house in Cavendish Square. Cotes did not agree with some of his protégé’s opinions and also had the habit of swearing. This disturbed Russell, which is apparent in comments such as, “My Master disturbed me with oaths at my prayers.”<sup>82</sup> Russell records that Cotes actively prevented him from visiting evening services on weekdays by ordering him to attend a series of auctions instead.<sup>83</sup> As a reaction to this restriction, Russell began to pray with members of his master’s household and his fellow pupils. He noted that, “my master in the morning disturbed Molly [the maid servant] and me as we were at Prayers”. Cotes, as Russell complained further, “used many oaths and gave us great abuse.”<sup>84</sup> Later, Cotes made “Molly promise not again to hear the Methodists”,<sup>85</sup> and he appears to have lectured his students too, as Russell wrote that “Cotes ordered Milbourn [a fellow pupil] never to go near me again.”<sup>86</sup>

As with his family and his master’s household, the young painter’s relationship to incidental travel acquaintances and to his sitters was marked by his religious convictions. Russell had a reputation, especially in the early years after his conversion, for being rather excitable on the topic of religion. The diary contains many examples of Russell using coach journeys for religious discussions. For

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Vol.6, p.62, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1775. That minister could have been the Rev. Charles Edward de Coetlogon (1746-1820). Russell liked de Coetlogon’s preaching so much that he gave a copy of one of the preacher’s sermons to his father, who, thereupon, invited de Coetlogon to preach in Guildford. Russell received a letter from his sister to invite De Coetlogon to preach in Guildford (RD, Vol.6, p.4, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1773). However, as soon as de Coetlogon had agreed to visit Guildford, Russell learned that “the curate Mr Kelly [of Guildford] who requested them [Russell’s family] to desire Mr Decoetlogon to preach, fear now prevails and declines Father expresses great kindness to Mr Decoetlogon and anger to the Curate” (RD, Vol.6, p.5, 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> May 1773). Russell’s portrait of the preacher was exhibited at the R.A. in 1793, No.674, see Appendix 2, p.204.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Williamson, 1894, p.9, from RD, Vol.1, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1766.

<sup>83</sup> Williamson, 1894, pp.9-10, quoting RD, Vol.1, 1766.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.26, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1766.

<sup>85</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.10, quoting RD, Vol.1, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1767.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., quoting RD, Vol.2, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1768.

instance, he recorded meeting John Gull, a former servant of the late Cotes, when he was setting out for Guildford. Gull “first talk’d to me Religion find him sadly gone back was enabled to preach to him and another person who I hard swear with great power.”<sup>87</sup> Russell also frequently involved his sitters in religious discussion. One representative example of the mistrust and dislike which Russell occasionally provoked with his religious rigour, is his first travelling commission to Cowdray House, where he spent four weeks between December 1767 and January 1768. He confided to his diary that he

“had a good deal of conversation with Lady Montague, but as there were other persons present we had not any opportunity to speak on the things of God [...] Lord Montague said that my manner was hateful so like a Methodist, and would frighten anyone from religion.”<sup>88</sup>

On another day, “Lady Montague favoured me with a good deal of Christian conversation in my Painting Room, and I was enabled to speak with power upon some cases of conscience she put to me”. However, Russell was aware that he was increasingly out of favour with Lord Montague. “I am well assured Lord Montague’s afraid of his character by my being in the house, on account of my bearing the name of Methodist; the inference that may be drawn from his own words clearly indicates he wants me gone.”<sup>89</sup>

After the first, often turbulent, years of his life as an Evangelical Russell’s approach to religious debate became more diplomatic. This led to the aforementioned improvement in his relationships with his own family and with his sitters. His diary contains an entry, dated 1780, which illustrates Russell’s altered attitude. He described the conversation with a lady who “sadly opposed the doctrine of grace.” Similar situations in previous years irresistibly hurled Russell into emotional arguments. Now, however, he wrote, “My soul was kept mild, and I spoke in tenderness. I have found my blood firing to reply, but I have been kept from giving the lead way, such having the comforts of religion it is hard fighting.”<sup>90</sup> The

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.10, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1771.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., Vol.2, p.13, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1767.

<sup>89</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.13, quoting RD, Vol.2, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1767.

<sup>90</sup> RD, Vol.8, p.1, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1780.

dominant view among writers discussing Russell's religion is that the artist was "unwise"<sup>91</sup> and "an absolute pain, inflicting his religious mania"<sup>92</sup> on his contemporaries. This does not, however, reflect the depth of the primary sources and needs to be supplemented by further study of Russell's religion. In order to re-evaluate the effect of Russell's religiosity it is vital to consider it in the context of his art. In doing so we can understand for example Russell's relationship to the R.A., which was one of mixed feelings and compromises.

As a private man Russell lived his religious philosophy, but this did not hinder him from showing loyalty to his professional home, the Royal Academy. He was one of the most productive members of that institution,<sup>93</sup> and the diarist Joseph Farington's (1747-1821) notes reveal that Russell attended numerous meetings at the academy. Russell was friendly with some of his colleagues, as his portraits of Alexander Ramsay, Francesco Bartolozzi, and of the wife of Pietro William Tomkins show.<sup>94</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds appears to have taken a liking to Russell too.<sup>95</sup> However, the Methodist painter would never share the life-style of his more worldly colleagues. Before he was even elected, he noted his fears that if he became an academician, "it was likely to hurt me & if not to the glory of God it might be prevented."<sup>96</sup> After fifteen years of being an Associate, Russell was indeed elected a full Academy member in 1787. His diary reflects his fear of the worldliness of the Academy. In June 1771 he noted,

"[I] was oblig'd to dine at Somerset House with the Royal Academicians. I look'd up to God that I might be preserv'd from falling into any thing that was offensive to him in this Hour of Temptation – I was kept in fear that made my Heart beat with violent agitation, I left them soon as I coul'd was enabled not to shew any countenance to any thing evil".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Elsley, 1915, quoted in the Introduction, p.14.

<sup>92</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, p.89, quoted in the Introduction, p.15.

<sup>93</sup> See Appendix 2, pp.197-207, for a list of the paintings Russell exhibited at the RA.

<sup>94</sup> For Bartolozzi and Tomkins see Williamson, 1894, p.32.

<sup>95</sup> Russell recorded that Reynolds "sent a message to me to desire me to dine at the Royal academy" before the young painter was even a member (RD, Vol.3, p.78, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1769). After becoming an associate, Russell again "supped with Sr Joshua Reynolds" (ibid., Vol.5, p.160, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1772). In 1773 Russell "was politely treated by Sr. Joshua Reynolds who has done me a favour today" (Ibid., Vol.6, p.7, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1773) and he "spent the evening at the Turks Head with Sr. Joshua Reynolds" (ibid., Vol.6, p.32, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1773).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., Vol.8, p.61, 16<sup>th</sup> Aril 1786.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.2, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1771.

Two years later he wrote that he was “Obliged to fly from the R.A. as they were full of filthy blaspheming the scriptures.”<sup>98</sup> Russell even established the superstitious connection between mixing with “blasphemous” company and the many accidents he experienced. On walking to the Turk’s Head in order to partake in a meeting of “The Club” in January 1773, he counted himself lucky to be “preserved from broken bones or death [...] in a near escape from being rode over by a carriage”.<sup>99</sup> On another occasion Russell was “nearly choked by a fish-bone, because [!] of going to the R.A.”<sup>100</sup> The offensive behaviour at the academy frightened him and he summarised his rejection of the life-style of his Royal Academy fellows by writing, “I love not these delights of the world”.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, and despite his success as a painter, Russell remained something of a social outsider. This he was only too aware of, being “sensible of the ridicule pourd [sic] upon me for my particularity”.<sup>102</sup> He was antipathetic towards the life-style of other Academicians and was sometimes humiliated by them. Russell’s repeated attendance at the Academy shows, however, that these things did not prevent him from endeavouring to be, to the extent which he could reconcile with his conscience, part of London’s painterly elite.

### **Russell as Part of the Evangelical Revival**

John Russell was, from the moment of his conversion to Methodism by the Rev. Martin Madan (1726-90), part of London’s Evangelical community.<sup>103</sup> This community lay at the heart of the Evangelical Revival, which was not one homogenous movement but rather consisted of various branches. Most Revivalists were either Methodists or other Nonconformists in the Church of England. While these various groups had their differences, they tended to stress their common fundamental beliefs and thus formed the broader group of Evangelicals.<sup>104</sup> The core

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.174, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1773.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p.169, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1773.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.175, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1773.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.1, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1771.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.174, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1773.

<sup>103</sup> Sources on the Evangelical Revival are plentiful. Balleine, 1908 and reprinted many times, is an old, but beautifully concise and well written summary of the Evangelicals with a focus outside Methodism. More general is Moorman, 1953. From the same year, Elliott-Binns, and from later years the accounts of Davies (1963), Hylson-Smith, and most importantly Bebbington (both 1989) were important. Ditchfield, 1998, presents a new type of approach in text book format, which also inspired Aston, 2002.

<sup>104</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1988, p.52.

Evangelical beliefs were, firstly, that no individual could guarantee his own salvation, which could only be given by God. Secondly, once God had granted redemption, it was the believer's duty to invest his energies in leading others onto the same path. It is through this mass-commitment to pastoral work that missionary activity and charity emerged to an unprecedented degree. A third common principle was the above-mentioned increased devotion to the Bible, as all Revivalists placed a new emphasis on the Gospel and the message of hope. Finally, Evangelicals shared the belief that the reconciliation of fallen man with God was facilitated through atonement. These principles attacked the frivolous tendencies both in society and among the ranks of the Anglican clergy.<sup>105</sup>

Russell frequently met with other Evangelicals as well as with Dissenters, who were distinct from Evangelicals by being protestant worshippers outside the Church.<sup>106</sup> The artist did his best to guide Baptists, Independents, and Quakers onto what he considered the right path of Evangelicalism, declaring, "my soul has been in Love with God and his creatures for his sake".<sup>107</sup> Russell's own place within the Evangelical community lay firmly amongst the Calvinist Methodists.<sup>108</sup> This branch of the Revival had emerged in England in the 1740s under the leadership of John Wesley (1703-91), his brother the hymn composer Charles Wesley (1707-88), and the preacher George Whitefield.<sup>109</sup> Like the Evangelical Revival, Methodism itself consisted of several branches. At first, different doctrinal views on questions such as for whom Christ died, coexisted, and the common belief in the Gospel was stressed. However, these different opinions grew increasingly troublesome and gradually increased the breach between the branches of Methodism. John Wesley, on the one hand, answered the above question confidently by advocating Arminianism, that is the belief that Christ died for every human being, and, if a person wholeheartedly wanted to be saved, this might happen. George Whitefield, on the other hand,

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<sup>105</sup> Moorman, 1980, p.302.

<sup>106</sup> Bebbington, 1989, pp.20, 27-34; Webb, "The Emergence of Rational Dissent", in: Haakonssen, 1996, p.12. Among Russell's preacher portraits are many of dissenting sitters, such as the Baptist Ministers the Rev. Joseph Gwennap (1731-1813) and the Rev. John MacGowan (1726-1780). (Gwennap, engraving from 1772, N.P.G.; MacGowan, engraving c.1770, N.P.G.) Russell even discussed religion with Deists. He confided to his diary that he had spent a day "with a celebrated writer with whom I had much argument of Religion. The Gentleman is of a deistical turn..." (RD, Vol.5, p.72, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1771. See also RD, Vol.6, p.31, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1773). Russell also mentioned conversations with Quakers, one of whom was "a Lady who had been my Scholar – dull" (RD, Vol.6, p.91, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1778).

<sup>107</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.5, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1771.

<sup>108</sup> Russell called himself a Methodist, see for example RD, Vol.3, p.14, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1769.

<sup>109</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1989, pp.10, 19.

maintained the Calvinist idea of predestination of the souls which would be saved. These opposing views made it essential for Methodists to choose the side to which they belonged.

Russell's diary entries allow a reconstruction of his personal position in this Methodist controversy. He recognised John Wesley's status as a "great servant of God", but considered the famous preacher a man "in some things doubtless mistaken".<sup>110</sup> A few years previously Russell had gone to hear Wesley preach, in order, as he wrote, not to "Indulge my Prejudice", but he afterwards commented, "I can not acknowledge his discourse to be entirely consistent with the Book of God."<sup>111</sup> Wesley's portrait sittings to Russell, and his staying for dinner and prayer afterwards, did not improve the painter's opinion of Wesley.<sup>112</sup> Doctrinal comments in the artist's diaries, as well as his emphatic admiration for George Whitefield, clearly show that Russell was a Calvinist Methodist. He testified to his conviction in March 1768, when he wrote in a clear statement against Arminianism that he had heard Whitefield speaking "sweetly on the Doctrinal points in a loving manner reproving of the Advocates for universal Redemption."<sup>113</sup> Three decades later, when Russell visited Leeds in 1799, he gave the following account of the religious climate there, displaying an unchanged, anti-Arminian view. He wrote, "The Methodist societys are very large in Leeds & extend to all villages & towns adjacent. They do not seem to run into the arminian views so much as in Town; are more useful & pious of consequence."<sup>114</sup>

The leading Calvinist preacher George Whitefield, though he died only a few years after Russell's conversion, remained the most important religious influence on the artist throughout his life. Whitefield's name is one of those most frequently mentioned in Russell's diary. It first appears in 1766 in a note on the preacher's "Love Feast", at which Russell felt "extreamely happy and comfortable".<sup>115</sup> During the late 1760s, Russell attended many of Whitefield's sermons and usually left them in good spirits.<sup>116</sup> Whitefield's inimitable preaching, Russell wrote, "surpass'd

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<sup>110</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.73, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1771.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.70, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1766.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.73, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1771.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Vol.2, p.91, March 1768.

<sup>114</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.12-14. The entries in this volume are almost never dated and dates are therefore omitted in the referencing of these quotations. The time scale is August till December 1799.

<sup>115</sup> RD, Vol.1, p.19, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1766.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.33, late 1766, exact date cannot be determined; p.44, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1766; p.69, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1766; p.93, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1767.

anything I have ever heard before the most awful and affecting discourse that I can remember to have heard here was scarce an eye without a tear.”<sup>117</sup> Russell attempted to persuade others to hear the great preacher. In 1767 he “got Satisfaction and a Pleasing Frame” when his master “Promis’d to hear Mr Whitefield next Sunday”,<sup>118</sup> and he also took his future wife’s family to hear Whitefield.<sup>119</sup> Russell painted the preacher’s portrait in 1769 (fig.26) and appears to have been intimate with his famous sitter, who visited the artist repeatedly, and occasionally invited him to share a coach.<sup>120</sup> The painter grew so fond of his favourite preacher that he was greatly affected by the news of Whitefield’s departure to Georgia.<sup>121</sup> Russell attended at least three farewell sermons and described himself as “greatly moved”, and he “quite rejoiced” at hearing that Whitefield’s absence would be only a short one.<sup>122</sup> The news that Whitefield had died, shortly after his arrival in America, affected Russell greatly.<sup>123</sup> He went to hear Wesley preaching Whitefield’s funeral sermon and even copied a lengthy account of Whitefield’s death from a newspaper into his diary.<sup>124</sup> That Whitefield continued to influence Russell even after his death is shown in the artist’s diary. Towards the end of his own life, over three decades after the grief of Whitefield’s death, Russell heard a sermon that, he recorded happily, reminded him of the great preacher.<sup>125</sup>

One of Whitefield’s legacies was that he left behind a group of devoted preachers and patrons of Calvinist Methodism. Among those was Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-91), who attempted to introduce Methodism among the aristocracy with incessant missionary spirit (figs. 28, 30).<sup>126</sup> Russell must have been interested in the Countess as she represented an opportunity to increase his clientele

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., Vol.3, p.105, late July, early August.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.102, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1767.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., Vol.3, p.118, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1769.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., Vol.2, p.132, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1768. Towards the end of 1768 Russell “spent a delightfull hour and a half with the much honord Mr Whitefield” (ibid., Vol.3, p.3, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1768). See also Vol.2, p.91, March 1768; p.117, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1768; p.126, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1768.

<sup>121</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.42.

<sup>122</sup> RD, Vol.3, p.116, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1769; p.120, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1769; p.123, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1769.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., Vol.4, p.89, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1770; pp.89-91, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1770; p.114, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1770.

<sup>124</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.42, for the funeral sermon from 18 November 1770. RD, Vol.4, pp.114-117, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1770.

<sup>125</sup> RD, Vol.D, p.16, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1801.

<sup>126</sup> Williamson, 1989, p.24; Hindmarsh, 1996, p.107; Abbey and Overton, Vol.ii, pp.220-221. Lady Huntingdon, with her chapel foundations and preacher college, is among the most famous patrons of Methodism. Lord Dartmouth and Lord Teignmouth were also prominent, the latter being involved with the Clapham circle in the early nineteenth century. Among politicians, William Wilberforce stands out, whose policies were inspired by Evangelicalism. He also had a considerable impact on the general public through his writings. (Abbey and Overton, Part II, pp.119-220)



among the upper classes. Sources on Russell's relationship with the Countess are rare. However, Russell portrayed her and her daughters, and mentioned her occasionally in his diary. Although Russell refused to join the Countess' Preaching Academy in Wales,<sup>127</sup> he enjoyed an "Edifying conversation with Lady Huntingdon" and appreciated her "good advise", which, he wrote, impressed him so much that he hoped "not to forget it to my Dying Day".<sup>128</sup> Russell's reverence for the Countess appears to have endured. Over twenty years after their first meeting, in the year of her death, the artist accompanied her to Brighton for the opening of one of her chapels.<sup>129</sup>

While the Countess of Huntingdon made a lasting impression on Russell, he had closer relationships to Whitefield's London preachers. The artist mentioned these preachers many times in his diary, signifying that they were part of his everyday life. The Rev. William Romaine's (1714-95) sermons at St. Dunstan's were among those most frequently visited by Russell. It was Romaine who married the artist to Hannah Faden, whose family kept a print and map-making shop at Charing Cross.<sup>130</sup> Russell had converted Hannah some months previously.<sup>131</sup> In Romaine's sermons Russell seems to have found relief from his grief for Whitefield.<sup>132</sup> The Rev. Martin Madan, who had converted Russell in 1764, was of a similar lasting importance to the artist. Madan made the Lock Chapel a stronghold of the Revival in London,<sup>133</sup> and unlike any of his contemporaries he promoted music as the most powerful argument of Evangelicalism. The singing of hymns by the congregation was a custom which had been introduced by the Methodists, who saw in music a way to enable the congregation to participate personally in the worship.<sup>134</sup> Music clearly appealed to Russell too, as he mentions in his diaries, that he "found melting in singing an Hymn"<sup>135</sup> or that he "was bless'd with Gods presence in the singing".<sup>136</sup> In Evangelical London singing and communal worship were not restricted to church and chapel services, but extended to private meetings.

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<sup>127</sup> See Introduction, p.15.

<sup>128</sup> RD, Vol.3, p.34, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1769.

<sup>129</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.60.

<sup>130</sup> RD, Vol.3, p.186, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1770; p.190, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1770; Williamson, 1894, pp.19-20.

<sup>131</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.19.

<sup>132</sup> RD, Vol.4, p.92, 8<sup>th</sup> November 1770.

<sup>133</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1989, pp.30-31.

<sup>134</sup> Elliott-Binns, 1953, p.81; Brewer, 1995, p.343, "Any singing, before the reforms of the Evangelical Revival encouraged large congregational choirs, often consisted of a weak dirge."

<sup>135</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.1, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1771.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1771.

One of the most eminent builders of the emerging social network was the Rev. Henry Peckwell (1747-87), whom Russell portrayed in 1775.<sup>137</sup> Among the most energetic followers of Whitefield, Peckwell presided over the religious society at Chapel Street. Russell joined the society in 1772 after having searched for several years for a group of likeminded people for prayer and singing.<sup>138</sup> The artist regularly attended the weekly, uplifting gatherings, at which he met many of Lady Huntington's students and other Calvinists. Russell became integrated with London's Calvinist circles through Peckwell's society, and through his professional and private acquaintances with leading preachers like Romaine and Madan.

Russell spent most of the late 1760s and the 1770s in the capital, but in the 1780s he became intimately acquainted with the Methodist strongholds at Olney, Clapham, York, Leeds, and Hull. Russell, through his function as portraitist of the Revival, was an integral part of the network which existed between these places. The artist's involvement with provincial Evangelical activity began with his acquaintance with Henry Stokes who introduced Russell to the eminent Revival 'diplomat' John Newton (1725-1807), the then curate of Olney. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between Russell and Newton.<sup>139</sup> Newton introduced the painter to his circle, including the poet William Cowper, who was Martin Madan's cousin,<sup>140</sup> the Rev. John Ryland of Northampton (1723-92),<sup>141</sup> and James Hervey (1714-58), author of the Evangelical bestseller *Mediations among the Tombs*.<sup>142</sup> Later, Russell was introduced to the Thorntons and the Venns in Clapham, whom he portrayed extensively.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> RA 1775, No.258.

<sup>138</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.163, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1772; p.165, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1772.

<sup>139</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.53.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp.52-54, states that Russell met Cowper after 1780. Williamson describes the portrait of Cowper as a 20 x16 in. preparatory pastel sketch, showing the poet with a thoughtful face, wearing a blue cloak, and a blue turban. He further points out the similarity with the portraits of Cowper by Romney, Abbot, Jackson and Lawrence.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.53, calls Russell's portrait of Ryland "very successful". It was engraved for the sitter's *Contemplations on the beauties of Creation*.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Hennell, 1958, p.285, One of the most important portraits in this context was that of the leading Yorkshire Evangelical Henry Venn (1725-97), father of John Venn, whose sermons Russell occasionally attended in London. (RD, Vol.3, p.56, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1769: "heard Mr Venn at the Lock my Soul found some refreshment under the word"; Ibid., Vol.5, p.12, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1771; p.127, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1772.) Russell also painted Venn's daughter Eling Venn, who married Charles Elliott (1752-1826), who himself was a dedicated member of the Revival and John Thornton's close friend. Further portraits include those of Sarah Maria Elliott, aged 4, eldest daughter of Charles Elliott (1785) and of William Parson Elliott, second son of Charles Elliott, at the age of 15 (1795). Williamson, 1894, p.150, also mentions two pastels of John Thornton and of Mrs. John Thornton, the latter of which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788. Brown, 1961, pp.72-73 (FN2).

The Thorntons of Clapham were related through the marriage of John Bacon's daughter Elizabeth to John Thornton's son.<sup>144</sup> The sculptor lived only a few houses away from the painter in Newman Street. Russell lived at No. 21, while Bacon lived at No.17, "in the centre of a perfect little colony of distinguished artists, and nearly a dozen of his most celebrated contemporaries lived within a stone's throw", including West, Lawrence, Barry, Banks, Nollekens, Flaxman, Copley, Opie, Stothard, Russell, Fuseli, and Kaufmann.<sup>145</sup> There existed a particularly close relationship between two generations of Bacons, Russells, and Rigauds, who shared "religious sympathies".<sup>146</sup> At the time of their first acquaintance, Russell was going through a spell of hardship. In May 1785 the painter wrote in his diary that he felt "very low in body & [...] soul." He further wrote, "My outer circumstances very pressing, great fearing I shall not be able to support my family: many troublesome & painful perplexities are upon me." At that time he experienced some relief from Bacon's company, writing, "I have been edified in conversation with Mr. Bacon the Sculptor who I hope though complaining of foul falls is a good & sincere man."<sup>147</sup> By August of that year Russell and Bacon had become friends.

"Mr Bacon whom I mentioned has been very intimate with me ever since. I hope I have been useful to him as he has been to me in spiritual conversation. Scarce a day passed without his calling."<sup>148</sup>

After the entries quoted above Russell stopped writing a continuous diary and only entered sporadic comments, which sometimes lie months or even years apart. Bacon was, around that time, very important in Russell's life, as he is mentioned in most of these rare diary entries.

Several portraits, by Russell, survive of one of the most enigmatic figures associated with the Evangelical Revival, the politician William Wilberforce (1759-1833). When Wilberforce turned to Newton for advice on how to live a god-fearing life, he was told to keep his worldly position, but to use it for doing good. It was Evangelical thought which motivated Wilberforce's commitment to his work as MP

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<sup>144</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.150.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.56; Bacon, 1907, pp.18-20.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.21; Saunders, 1961, pp.18, 22 (FN20). John Francis Rigaud (1742-1810), Gt. Titchfield Street, was a portrait and ceiling painter. Bacon was an "ardent follower of Whitefield" and is buried in the Tabernacle in the Tottenham Court Road.

<sup>147</sup> RD, Vol.8, p.67, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1785.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.68, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1785.

for Yorkshire and to the abolition of the slave trade in the 1790s.<sup>149</sup> Wilberforce did not belong to any particular branch of the Revival, and himself commented on the ambiguity of his status, writing, “I frankly confess that I myself am no Calvinist, though I am not either an anti-Calvinist.”<sup>150</sup> After the death of his father in 1768, young William lived with his aunt and uncle, Hannah and William Wilberforce, in Wimbledon. John Thornton, Clapham’s great patron of Evangelicalism, was a half-brother to Hannah.<sup>151</sup> Russell knew the Wilberforces, and probably valued the acquaintance because of their shared admiration of Whitefield.<sup>152</sup> He painted William, whom he called a “sweet youth”, as an eleven year old boy in Van Dyck costume.<sup>153</sup> The boy, as the artist observed at the time, “has the appearance of conversion upon his Soul”.<sup>154</sup> The sitter also remembered this first portrait session with Russell and mentioned the artist in his diary as a “very religious man”.<sup>155</sup> Russell produced several more portraits of the Evangelical politician around the turn of the century. One such painting depicts Wilberforce holding the Slave Trade Abolition Bill and was commissioned by the Leeds surgeon William Hey (1736-1819).<sup>156</sup>

Russell spent months on end, especially in the later years of his life, visiting and painting his friends in Yorkshire. The most extensive records of these journeys survive in the form of a travel diary from his stay in Leeds, from August until November 1799. This diary, kept with the thoroughness and discipline of Russell’s early years, grants rare insights into his later life. The artist spent his days strolling through Leeds and the surrounding towns. He keenly observed the advances of industrialisation, was interested in the cloth halls in Leeds, and drew town panoramas in his sketchbooks.<sup>157</sup> He also visited country houses, to portray the owners and to study their art collections.<sup>158</sup> However, more than anything, Russell

<sup>149</sup> Abbey and Overton, 1878, Vol.2, p.217-219.

<sup>150</sup> Letter by Wilberforce to Robert Southey, 5<sup>th</sup> December [?], 2519/63, National Library of Scotland, quoted by Dixon, 1971, p.86.

<sup>151</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1989, p.77; Brown, 1961, p.61.

<sup>152</sup> In RD, Vol.4, pp.178-179, late May 1771 Russell describes that Mrs. Wilberforce sat to him at least twice, and that he enjoyed their conversations. See also *ibid.*, Vol.5, p.50, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1771.

<sup>153</sup> NPG 759; Walker, 1985, p.553: 12 x 10 in. Russell made at least two more copies of this painting. This portrait is similar to Russell’s painting of Charles Wesley jun. at a piano, who is wearing a Van Dyck costume as well.

<sup>154</sup> RD, Vol.4, p.129, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1770.

<sup>155</sup> quoted in Walker, 1985, p.553, who quoted Wilberforce’s diary entry from 31<sup>st</sup> July 1801, published in Wilberforce’s *Life* I, pp.5-6.

<sup>156</sup> Walker, 1985, pp.553-554.

<sup>157</sup> E.g., Russell, 1799, pp.1-3. RSB I, pp.1, 3-5.

<sup>158</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.5-7, 47-54.

enjoyed participating in the local prayer groups. For Russell, one of the key Evangelical figures in Leeds was the above-mentioned surgeon William Hey, who was the best-known lay leader of Methodism after Wilberforce and Thornton.<sup>159</sup> Hey became Russell's close friend; their families were connected through marriage and when Russell suffered deafness towards the end of his life, it was Hey to whom he turned for treatment.<sup>160</sup> Hey was also one of Russell's greatest patrons and commissioned him extensively.<sup>161</sup> While the artist stayed in Leeds, his surgeon friend often accompanied him on excursions. For example, Russell noted in his diary that "Mr. Hay was so obliging as to take me about four miles from Leeds to Temple Newsham",<sup>162</sup> where Russell inspected the art collection of Lady Erwin. During the coach ride home the men, who frequently conversed on matters of natural philosophy, discussed colour theory.<sup>163</sup> Most importantly for Russell, however, Hey's tea society introduced the London painter to Yorkshire's Evangelicals. The artist became acquainted with the key figures of that circle, including the "astronomical gentleman" the Rev. Sheepshanks,<sup>164</sup> the Sunday school master Mr. Sawyer,<sup>165</sup> and one of the leading Yorkshire Revival ministers, the Rev. Miles Atkinson.<sup>166</sup> Less well documented in writing but indicated through the surviving portraits of local characters, Russell also made acquaintances in York<sup>167</sup> and Hull.<sup>168</sup>

In Yorkshire Russell found a greater Evangelical spirit than he had experienced in London. This was due to the superior strength which the Evangelical

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<sup>159</sup> Walsh, 1956, p.282.

<sup>160</sup> Jane de Courcy Russell (1779-1810), the artist's daughter, married Mr. Joshua Jowett (1776-1845), the surgeon's nephew. Russell's deafness occurred in 1803. Williamson, 1894, pp.79, 83.

<sup>161</sup> The Hey portrait is now at Leeds City Gallery; his wife with spinning wheel, pastel, 1800 (Williamson, 1894, p.147). Russell further painted their daughter Miss Hey of Leeds who married the Rev. Robert Jarratt (oil, undated), and Mrs. Dykes (nee Mary Hey) and the pendant of her husband the Rev. Thomas Dykes (1794).

<sup>162</sup> Russell, 1799, p.5.

<sup>163</sup> See p.100 (FN424).

<sup>164</sup> Williamson's photo collection at the NPG contains images of Mr. Sheepshanks, holding a book; Mrs. Sheepshanks; J. Sheepshanks, holding a letter, (1802); Mrs. Ann Sheepshanks (1802).

<sup>165</sup> Russell was very much in favour of what he saw of the Sunday Schools. "I saw the Sunday Schools on the moor, near Wood house about one hundred Boys in the other about as many Girls they seem well conducted & are under the immediate inspection of Mr. S[awyer] who took me to see them. If these schools always continue in such hands, much good maybe expected from them... The number of Boys & Girls thus restrain in Leeds amounts to two thousand and I understand are carefully attended to by religious persons consequently well conducted." Russell, 1799, pp.9-10.

<sup>166</sup> Russell painted the Rev. Miles Atkinson (1741-1811), Minister of St. Paul's, Leeds, at least twice around 1800, and his wife around that time too. (Williamson, 1894, p.135)

<sup>167</sup> For example Mrs. Jeremy Dixon of York on a spinning wheel, 1802, Guildford, and the Rev. John Graham, for 49 years Rector of St. Saviour and St. Mary, Bishopshill, York (1790).

<sup>168</sup> Williamson, 1894, in his Appendix of Russell's works, lists amongst others, the portraits of Rev. Thomas Dykes (1794), his daughter Mary (undated), Dr. Birkbeck of Hull (undated), and Thomas Thompson M.P. (1754-1828), partner in the Smiths Bank at Hull who was the chairman of the Hull Docks, also M.P. and Methodist lay preacher, with religious views in common with Russell.

Revival had accumulated in its northern centres compared to the capital, where it occurred only in a diluted form.<sup>169</sup> When Hey was mayor of Leeds, he attempted to use this position to fight profanity and sin. Indeed, the surgeon's Evangelical endeavours went so far that at one point angry crowds burnt effigies of the mayor in the streets.<sup>170</sup> Russell, however, found the religiousness of the North appealing.

“I do not hear the evil language in the streets of Leeds as in London I have not heard an oath nor have I been witness to an immoral action. This place is very remarkable in respect to religion and what is more so that amongst the rich & great a very considerable body are devout, approve & receive the Gospel.”<sup>171</sup>

Russell's Evangelical acquaintances did not only influence his private life but also shaped his artistic career. While Russell ventured to be part of the Academy world, his preacher friends, and their families, provided the foundation for his portraiture by supplying him with a sympathetic and seemingly inexhaustible clientele. As the painter of the Revival, and the friend of many of its members, Russell had found a secure place within the extensive network of Britain's Evangelical families. Another reason for Russell's contemporary success was that his belonging to the Revival was more socially acceptable than is often acknowledged.

### **Methodists in Society: Enemies to Decency and Order?**

While the first part of this chapter examined Russell's Methodist religiosity, the remainder analyses the position of Russell's Evangelical network in society. A mistrust of Revivalists arose from their emotional attitude to worship, which was branded “enthusiastic”. Indeed, this “enthusiasm” led contemporaries, as well as historians, to believe that Methodism was a radical movement which might threaten the authority of both Church and state.<sup>172</sup> However, not all contemporaries considered Methodism to be a danger to order. Some valued the members of this religious group for their work ethic, which helped stabilise their place within

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<sup>169</sup> Walsh, 1956, p.275.

<sup>170</sup> Hey was mayor of Leeds twice, 1787-88 and 1801-02. DNB, Vol.xxvi, 1891, p.314.

<sup>171</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.12-13.

<sup>172</sup> Davie, 1978, p.45; Gilbert, 1993, pp.79-86.

society. Therefore, the notion of an anti-social Methodism was based on contemporary generalisation, which concentrated on controversial aspects while failing to note the conservative features of Methodism. This negative image, in the public eye, led historians to condemn the religious aspects of the lives of artists such as John Russell. However, the painter's religion is of such importance that it cannot be neglected in a study of his art. It is therefore necessary to reconstruct, from primary sources, what it meant to be an Evangelical in late eighteenth-century Britain.

Although Methodists were not the anti-social troublemakers as which they are often portrayed, certain aspects of their conduct appeared to challenge the establishment and therefore fuelled public suspicion. For example, Methodists notoriously withdrew from worldly society. Instead of spending their nights at theatres, public houses, or gambling dens, they gathered in religious societies at private homes.<sup>173</sup> By creating these social islands, and by spending most of their time shuttling between these restricted private spheres, Methodists created a rift between themselves and the public, who could only guess what was happening behind closed doors. However, one aspect of Evangelical religion, of which the excluded community was aware, was the intensity of Evangelical services. These differed from the traditional conduct of worship in the Church of England, for example, in the hymn singing.<sup>174</sup> Traditionally, music in the Church of England consisted of the congregation listening to a singing choir. In Methodist services, however, the parishioners themselves sang the hymns, which marked a break from the conventional separation of active and passive partakers of a service.<sup>175</sup> Critical observers contemplated this emotional and democratizing practice with suspicion.<sup>176</sup>

Those who saw Methodist hymn practice as an indication of anti-authoritarian tendencies, found the ecstatic conversions at Evangelical gatherings more unsettling still. They witnessed the effects which "enthusiastic" preaching could have on the bodies and souls of the listeners, seeing people throwing themselves to the ground, experiencing fits and bouts of insanity. This display led many sceptics of Evangelicalism to conclude that the emotional intensity of

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<sup>173</sup> Bebbington, 1989, p.24; Cecil, 1801, pp.39-40. The sculptor's biographer Cecil relates that the sculptor was worried about the bad influence blasphemous society might have on his family.

<sup>174</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1989, p.55.

<sup>175</sup> Elliott-Binns, 1953, p.81.

<sup>176</sup> Hindmarsh, 1996, p.263.

Methodism was causing madness. Indeed, one of the main goals of the Revival had been to replace what Evangelicals saw as the coldness and hypocrisy of the old style of worship with wholehearted religious conviction. William Hogarth's "Sleeping Congregation" (1736) (fig.5) alludes to the meaninglessness to which the Sunday gatherings of the Church of England had in many places degraded, and to the worldly life of many Anglican clergymen. Evangelicals were convinced that, in order to be close to God, people had to worship in a more genuine manner. In contrast to his "Sleeping Congregation", Hogarth's print "Enthusiasm Delineated" (c.1760) (fig.6) satirises the more emotional aspects of Evangelical worship, showing the fainting and raving of the parishioners.<sup>177</sup>

The scenario of the Christian in thrall to the luring words of the Methodist preacher was particularly associated with the gatherings of the masses at the London outdoor preaching events. During the early 1770s Russell frequently commented on field preaching in places like Moorfields and Kennington Common, often describing the audience as being "much in Tears".<sup>178</sup> At one event the crowds became so overwhelmed that they followed the preacher, a Mr. Neale, and Russell "to the door" of the artist's home and crowded the surrounding streets. Russell noted, "so uncommon a sight alarm'd the neighbourhood."<sup>179</sup> Fear-fuelled satires, both in word and image, challenged the Evangelical zeal of the most prominent Methodist preachers. Among the many anti-Methodist prints of the time is the anonymous "Dr. Squintum's Exaltation of the Reformation" (1763) (fig.7). A further example to illustrate the negative press is the anonymous, undated London publication *The Amorous Humours and Audacious Adventures of one Wh††††††††††D*. The poem accuses George Whitefield, who is only thinly disguised, of misleading those who trusted him.

"Have you not seen, with dauntless Pride,  
The Quack ascend with haughty Stride!  
His Moor-field Stage, to gull the Throng  
Of Health and Wealth, with artful Tongue?"<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Pointon, 1993, p.86.

<sup>178</sup> Stout, 1991, pp.66-83; quote: RD, Vol.5, pp.13-14, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1771.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Anon., c.1760, p.3.



The author identifies women as being particularly gullible to the alleged Evangelical fraud. Whitefield is named “Offspring of Lust” and his Love-feast, which Russell had mentioned as a source of comfort,<sup>181</sup> is described as an orgy. At this point the poem extends the criticism to John Wesley, declaring, “Thy Brother W[es]ly’s full as bad;/And ‘twixt you both the Girls run mad.”<sup>182</sup> The footnotes to the poem contain several examples of the preacher’s alleged malefaction. One of these relates the story of a young lady whom Whitefield persuaded “to break her rich China, for that her keeping such grand Vessels took off her Thoughts from God and Christ.”<sup>183</sup> The Methodist preachers were accused of preaching the renunciation of one’s wealth for God, while secretly gathering these goods for their own advantage. Whitefield, in the words of the poem, is but “a cunning crafty Elf,/At saving Souls, to save Himself?”<sup>184</sup>

The 1770 London publication *The Adventures of an Actor, in the Characters of a Merry-Andrew, a Methodist-preacher, and a fortune-teller* warns of the endangerment of social order, in the same way as the satirical poem. It tells the story of a charlatan, who pretended to be, at first, a fortune-teller and, subsequently, a Methodist preacher. Both professions were associated with misguiding people. The general mistrust of Methodists is further apparent in a pamphlet *To the Beneficed Clergy of the Diocese of London, The Humble Address of their (as yet uninfected) Parishioners*. This pamphlet urged the establishment in 1759 to stop Evangelical lecturers, declaring these “irregular Teachers” the “utter Enemies to Decency and Order”.<sup>185</sup> The public reaction to the perceived Methodist threat did not stop at polemic images and words, but expressed itself in violence at the field preaching events. While Russell noted in his diary that audiences grew from sermon to sermon, he increasingly wrote that hostile onlookers disturbed the preaching.<sup>186</sup> For the first time aggression flared up when Mr. Neale “had some stone thrown at him by an Enemy”. However, unperturbed by this attack the preacher addressed the offender with true Evangelical spirit and the words, “how happy was Stephen when he was ston’d to Death – God forgive the offending Person.”<sup>187</sup> Russell recorded many more incidences of disruption by “the Mob”. At one point he noted that some people

<sup>181</sup> RD, Vol.1, p.19, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1766.

<sup>182</sup> Anon., c.1760, p.9.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>185</sup> Hindmarsh, 1996, pp.292-294.

<sup>186</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.15, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1771.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p.19, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1771.

have “been getting drunk all Day in order to annoy us”.<sup>188</sup> One evening, Mr. Neale preached and the artist subsequently wrote that “the enemy roared horribly to night but was not able to hurt us, the serious people stood still tho they endeavour’d to wheel a cart in amongst us, I never heard Gods people so fervent in united prayer before”.<sup>189</sup>

The danger that some observers saw in Methodist preaching and conversions was complemented by the fear that Methodists might separate from the Church of England. In the words of the Whitefield polemic, Methodist anti-Church tendencies were leading “the gazing Wretch astray,/Out of the sure and ready Way”.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, parts of the Methodist branch of the Revival eventually broke away from the Church of England. This, however, did not mean that all Methodists wanted independence. Indeed, one key disagreement between Wesley’s Arminian and Whitefield’s Calvinist philosophies was on the question of Church authority. Wesley brought about the breaking away of Arminian Methodism from the Church by founding his branch of the movement on itinerant preachers. These independent, roaming preachers acted as competition to the Church of England’s parish priests. When Wesley appointed “quasi”-bishops in America in 1784, and in Scotland and England in the following year, he effectively established an Episcopal network, separate from the established Church. Whether this schism was deliberate or not, Wesley’s Methodism became increasingly independent.<sup>191</sup> By contrast, the Calvinist branch of Methodism remained within the established Church and subordinated itself to that authority. In line with the Whitefieldian stance Russell valued the Church of England, as an extract from his 1799 travel diary shows, where he stressed the importance of remaining within the establishment. He affirmed, “For my part I hope to continue thankful for the Bible & for the Church of England.”<sup>192</sup> Two years later, William Wilberforce still tellingly characterised Russell as being “very high church indeed”.<sup>193</sup>

An anonymous writer, in 1800, argued that in moving away from the Church, Wesleyan Methodists appeared not only to threaten the integrity of the religious establishment, but equally that of the worldly nation. He stated, “Every

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p.26, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1771.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p.32, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1771; also: ibid., p.29, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1771.

<sup>190</sup> Anon., c.1760, p.4.

<sup>191</sup> Moorman, 1980, pp.300-301.

<sup>192</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.12-14.

<sup>193</sup> Quoted in Walker, 1985, p.553, who quoted Wilberforce’s diary entry from 31<sup>st</sup> July 1801, published in Wilberforce’s *Life* I, pp.5-6.

kind of separation from the established Church by narrowing the ground on which that church stands, tends to weaken the foundation on which the government of this country is built.”<sup>194</sup> Those who were afraid that those religious groups which attempted to change the Church would necessarily try to change political structures, tended to generalise and failed to distinguish between the diverging attitudes of the denominations. In consequence all Methodists were commonly considered disloyal.<sup>195</sup> A suspicion of Methodists as a political danger existed even among members of the Revival. Evangelical Thomas Whitaker reasoned in 1802 that whenever a person converted to Methodism, “the king has lost a Royal subject, and the enemies of Church and state have gained an additional member”.<sup>196</sup> The Rev. Thomas Ellis Owen’s *Methodism Unmasked* parades a similar view, declaring that the Methodists were planning “a total overthrow of our religious and political constitutions” and that they were furthermore attempting to initiate the equivalent of the French Revolution in Britain.<sup>197</sup>

It is true that many new, and sometimes revolutionary, ideas circulated in late eighteenth-century Britain. However, these were attributable, not so much to Methodists, as to individual Dissenters, Deists, and to the contemporary exaggerated polemic itself. A great number of orthodox Dissenters were Whigs and followers of the leader of the opposition, Charles James Fox (1749-1806). A famous example of a Dissenter who entertained dangerous ideas was the Unitarian Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). On account of his involvement in the Revolution debate, he was violently attacked at his home by a mob and had to flee the country. However, the Tories and the Church, in reaction to individuals such as Priestley, turned their aggression not only against the revolutionary Dissenters, but also against all Evangelicals. This included the Calvinist Methodists,<sup>198</sup> even though this branch had not broken out of the established Church as Wesley’s Arminians had done.<sup>199</sup> An early nineteenth-century pamphlet still claimed that Methodists and “evangelical dissenters” belonged “more or less, to the same body” and that they were regarded

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<sup>194</sup> Anon., 1800, p.21.

<sup>195</sup> Walsh, 1965, p.303.

<sup>196</sup> T. Whitaker, MS paper read to the Elland Clerical Society, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1802, quoted in Walsh, 1965, p.303.

<sup>197</sup> T.E. Owen: *Methodism Unmasked*, 1802, Preface, p.v, quoted in: Walsh, 1965, p.303.

<sup>198</sup> Walsh, 1965, pp.302-310.

<sup>199</sup> Ditchfield, 1998, p.89; Gilbert, 1993, pp.81-86, attempts to make the case against the Halevy thesis and for a more politically active Methodism. He does not mention the fact that there are two very different sides to the movement.

in the public conscience as the “combined armies against the Church of England”.<sup>200</sup> In reality, however, many Methodists, such as John Russell, John Bacon, Henry Venn, Isaac Milner, and Miles Atkinson, were convinced Tories and were anything but revolutionary.<sup>201</sup> The Rev. Cecil, in his biography of John Bacon, wrote that the sculptor’s mind was

“continually on the wing to counteract the desperate attempts made, particularly for years past, to overturn Church and State, Order and Godliness. For though, from violent publications which he had read, he feared that the indiscrimination and misrepresentation of some loyalists would tend more to bring a good cause into disgrace than the craft or violence of its bitterest enemies.”<sup>202</sup>

Russell’s private records indicate that the artist disliked discussions on the affairs of worldly authority. He saw himself “never calculated” for political argument and further explained that “saying many strong things” in a debate “has been baneful to me.”<sup>203</sup> While he did not care for political debate, Russell was a staunch Tory, who respected the government, which he considered “a mild and valuable” institution.<sup>204</sup>

The acceptance of worldly authorities had always been part of Calvinist Methodists’ identity. Earlier Methodist hymns, which predate the French Revolution by decades, indicate that Whitefield’s followers had been loyal to the King long before the political tension of the late 1780s and the 1790s might have made such an affirmation necessary. The following sample from Whitefield’s hymnbook of 1766 celebrates the subjection of each believer to the sovereign.

“Secure us of his royal Race  
A Man to stand before thy Face,  
And exercise they Pow’r;  
With Wealth, Prosperity, and Peace,

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<sup>200</sup> Gilbert, 1993, p.90, quotes from J. Nightingale, *A Portrait of Methodism: being an impartial view of the rise, progress, doctrines, disciplines, and manners of the Wesleyan Methodists*. London 1807, p.471.

<sup>201</sup> Walsh, 1956; Armstrong, 1973, p.152.

<sup>202</sup> Cecil, 1801, p.49.

<sup>203</sup> RD, Vol.6, p.69, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1776.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p.79, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1777.

Our Nation and our church to bless,  
Till Time shall be no more.”<sup>205</sup>

Indeed, Whitefield’s followers reacted to the Revolution more conservatively than anti-Evangelical criticism suggests. Methodists frequently stated that they regarded the Revolution as God’s punishment of France for its sins as a nation. They argued that France now paid for the sinning of its deistical ‘philosophes’, the waste and luxury of its aristocracy, and its participation in the slave trade.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, while the association of Methodists with plotters and sympathisers with the Revolution was widespread, most Evangelical clergymen were in fact Tories, who regarded the French Revolution not as liberation gone astray but as a deliberate plot of Atheism.<sup>207</sup>

Russell expressed his anti-revolutionary views on his travels in Yorkshire in 1799. The artist visited Sir Thomas Gascoigne’s park near Aberford and felt compelled to defend the government at the sight of a triumphal arch, which Gascoigne had erected. Russell noted the inscription, “Liberty in north America triumphant in 1783.” The artist commented that this was “meant as an insult upon this country”. It was, in Russell’s view, a sign “Of our Freedom, as permitting unpunished such an impertinence & of our strength that there was nothing to fear from such liberties taken with government the mean breach of privilege being treated with silent contempt.” After reasoning that no other country would be as liberal as to let this insolence go unnoticed, Russell concludes, “Let this monument stand to the disgrace of the author and as a proof of the mild government of the land!”<sup>208</sup> In his diary Russell also repeatedly expressed his respect for the authority of the King. He wrote that he was “exceedingly gloomy” at the prospect of having to spend an evening at the Royal Academy on the occasion of a birthday dinner for the monarch, but he attended the event nevertheless. Russell accepted the invitation because he ranked his duty as a subject more highly than his private comfort and did not want to “appear disrespectful” to the King.<sup>209</sup>

Even if Russell found it far less attractive to debate politics than to talk about religion, the Aberford episode and his attitude to Academy attendance reflect his

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<sup>205</sup> Whitefield, 1766, pp.177-178, Hymn lxxv.

<sup>206</sup> Walsh, 1965, p.305.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. p.303.

<sup>208</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.21-22.

<sup>209</sup> RD, Vol.3, pp.78-79, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1769.

strong Tory feelings and show that a staunch Methodist could be an equally staunch conservative. While the unsympathetic polemic nurtured an image of Methodism as a subversive movement, many contemporaries recognised positive characteristics in Methodists, such as their reputed determination and reliability, which placed them much in demand in the labour market. Joseph Priestley acknowledged that Methodism turned the unreliable and undisciplined poor into a useful workforce.<sup>210</sup> An anonymous clergyman, in an address to his local squire, argued along the same lines that the conversion to Methodism had improved people.

“I would now ask you Sir, whether our servants or labourers were not at that time more content with their wages, less ready to murmur on accidental advantages in the price of provisions, and more willing to work extraordinary hours at the exigencies of their masters might require, than they are at present.”<sup>211</sup>

In fact, Methodism led Protestant Dissenters towards conservatism and directed them to accept authority rather than to challenge it.<sup>212</sup> An understanding of Russell’s relationship with the establishment enables more than the mere placing of the artist within contemporary society. Indeed, an examination of Russell’s conservatism illuminates the artist’s attitude to moral theory, which in turn contains the key to a religious reading of his work.

### **Order maintained: A Christian Philosophy of Morality and Nature**

In common with many of his Evangelical contemporaries, Russell’s interest in maintaining order was influenced by his attitude to moral theory. This philosophical tradition was based on the idea that parallels existed between the laws of the universe and those of society. David W. Bebbington wrote that “Evangelicals saw a

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<sup>210</sup> J. Priestley, *An Address to the Methodists*, prefixed to J. Wesley: *Original Letters* by the Rev. J. Wesley, Birmingham 1791, pp.xvii-xviii, quoted in Walsh 1965, p.310.

<sup>211</sup> Anon., 1805, pp.41-42.

<sup>212</sup> Hylson-Smith, 1989, p.60; Gilbert, 1993, pp.79, 81-82. Lecky, in his *History of England in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (1878), pointed out that Methodism had a calming influence on Britain. In the early twentieth century Halevy added to this the theory that Methodism was a source of political quietism that prevented a Revolution in Britain (Gilbert, 1993, pp.81-82). The debate was revitalised in the 1960s, but remains a complicated, interdisciplinary field of study. Ditchfield, 1998, p.86, comments that the Halevy thesis was, at best, not proven.

law-governed universe around them”,<sup>213</sup> and it was only a small step to see human government and the existing social hierarchy as copies of the great designer’s original idea. Among the many who advocated this philosophy was the American Jonathan Edwards (1703-58).<sup>214</sup> Edwards was the leader of the American Great Awakening, which George Whitefield had initiated. Though Edwards had never come to Europe himself, his writings on religious subjects were widely discussed in British Evangelical circles throughout the eighteenth century. The American preacher-philosopher is of particular interest in the context of this thesis because Russell, towards the end of his life, studied several of Edwards’ works and commented on them in his diary. Edwards believed that happiness was of central importance to society. He regarded joy as a form of worship and as a sign that mankind appreciated the rule and law which God had given to His Creation. Edwards accused unhappy creatures of rejecting the “eternal joy in God” and regarded them as active sinners.<sup>215</sup> In a sermon in 1739 he preached on the political relevance of the association of enjoyment with worship. In his diary Russell quoted lengthy passages from this sermon. He noted Edward’s conviction that “it is not to the contrary [sic] to the divine perfections to inflict upon wicked men a punishment”.<sup>216</sup> Edwards argued that a system of jurisdiction and punishment was necessary, because, he reasoned, people who disobey governmental instructions were breaking the law which God had originally laid down. He corroborated this theory by referring to the Bible, quoting from Matthew 25: 46, that sinners “shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” Echoing the Evangelist, Edwards preached that those who were unhappy, unappreciative, and those who sinfully broke the law would go to Hell, while those who obeyed God and the government gained “life eternal”.<sup>217</sup> Russell’s reflections on Edwards show that he agreed with the American preacher. He wrote, “My Meditations upon Edwards has been thus. What is the moral law but an exhibition of the divine perfections, the eternal law of right.”<sup>218</sup> Russell accepted state authority because he believed that God Himself had established it. Over twenty years before reading Edwards, after a heated debate, in which the artist found himself confronted with insults to the

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<sup>213</sup> Bebbington, 1989, p.58.

<sup>214</sup> Steele, 1994, pp.144-148, 216-218.

<sup>215</sup> Piper, 1998, p.38.

<sup>216</sup> Russell quotes Edwards in his diary, Vol.D, p.10, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1801.

<sup>217</sup> Nicholls, 1995, p.60.

<sup>218</sup> RD, Vol.D, p.25, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1801.

government, he wrote in his diary, “Lord grant we may not sin the previledges [sic] away.”<sup>219</sup>

If nature reflected the infallible wisdom of the divine Creator, then, the followers of moral theory believed, natural philosophy offered the most authoritative justification for the organisation of society. Methodological and technological improvements led to spectacular progress in natural philosophy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which inspired unprecedented confidence in the application of the knowledge of natural design to society. Every part of the natural world was considered part of the greater, harmonious whole. However, early in the eighteenth century Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) argued that such a natural harmony could not be projected onto human society. In his *Fable of the Bees* (1714-20) Mandeville granted that a universal disinterested charity as the equivalent of natural harmony would be desirable. However, he observed that this was a mere dream and irreconcilable with the reality of the British nation as an economic power, which would have to be built on self-interest. He saw no option but to choose between the two possible orientations of charity or egoism, writing, “Religion is one thing, and Trade is Another.”<sup>220</sup>

In opposition to Mandeville’s uncompromising vision, Joseph Butler (1692-1752) was among the most influential defenders of the theory that Christian morals could coexist with the economic requirements of the nation.<sup>221</sup> In his *Sermons* (1726) and *Analogy of Religion* (1736) he maintained that God had implanted in the human being not only charity, but self-interest. In moderate measures, he argued, self-interest stimulated society and had to be considered a positive quality which was in no opposition to Christian virtue. Contrasting Mandeville’s view of self-interest as purely egoistic pleasure, Butler argued that every human was equipped with a Christian conscience and that, therefore, he could only gain the greatest pleasure from the most virtuous actions. Donna Andrews phrased it thus,

“While Mandeville pointed out what he believed to be the inevitable disharmony between virtue and national glory, taunting the public by

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., Vol.6, p.79, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1777.

<sup>220</sup> Mandeville, 1723, p.358; quoted by Brewer: “ ‘The most polite Age and the most vicious’ – Attitudes towards culture as a commodity, 1660-1800”, in: Bermingham and Brewer, 1995, pp.341-361, here: pp.345, 348-349.

<sup>221</sup> Other writers who wrote on the subject include George Berkeley, William Law, Francis Hutcheson, and Alexander Pope. Andrew, 1989, p.35.



demanding they chose one or the other, Butler, Hutcheson, and Law saw the harmony of virtue and national interest and reassured their contemporaries that no real sacrifices were necessary.”<sup>222</sup>

Though the social reality was the same for both Butler and Mandeville, they proposed contrasting explanations why some should be condemned to suffering and submission, while others should have a natural right to rule.<sup>223</sup> The crucial difference between their views was that Mandeville interpreted such a world as heartless and selfish, while Butler argued that social hierarchy and self-interest were beneficial and divinely inspired. According to Butler, the end of all of society’s endeavours was naturally the good of humankind as a whole. According to this theory each human was obliged to fulfil his moral obligation by submitting to his station, and by doing so happily and wholeheartedly.<sup>224</sup> Reasonable people will, Butler wrote, “content themselves with calmly doing what their station requires”<sup>225</sup> and realise that God’s government was “of the very same kind with that, which the master exercises over his servants, or a civil magistrate over his subjects.”<sup>226</sup>

Butler erected his theoretical construct on the preconception that society was built in the same way as nature, that all elements of the harmonious structure were interdependent in a unique and predefined way. As shown above, Russell too believed that moral law was “but an exhibition of the divine perfections, the eternal law of right”,<sup>227</sup> and that human society was a mirror image of the natural world. Evangelicals were particularly keen to contemplate nature in order to better understand God’s rules. They believed that the study of the natural model would inspire the student to apply, to society, the essence of God’s Creation, benevolence. While the twentieth century assumed a fundamental incompatibility between religion and science, the majority of Russell’s contemporaries did not see any contradictions between religion and natural philosophy.<sup>228</sup> By the eighteenth century, the fascination with divine nature was widely reflected in poetry. Mark Akenside (1721-70), for example, in his *Hymn to Science* (1739), wrote,

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., pp.35-41, quote p.39.

<sup>223</sup> Haakonssen, 1996; Nicholls, 1995, pp.54-62.

<sup>224</sup> Everett, 1994, pp.13-16; Nicholls, 1995, p.63.

<sup>225</sup> Nicholls, 1995, p.65, quotes from Butler, Sermon 3: Preached before the House of Lords, in “six sermons”, The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God Joseph Butler, D.C.L. Late Lord Bishop of Durham, Oxford 1874, II, p.262.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>227</sup> RD, Vol.D, p.25, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1801.

<sup>228</sup> See p.110.

“Let [...] cautious step be trod;  
And from the dead, corporeal mass,  
Through each progressive order, pass  
To Instinct, Reason, God.”<sup>229</sup>

Erasmus Darwin’s (1731-1802) famous account of Creation in *The Botanic Garden* (1791) celebrates the greatness of the Creator.

“ – LET THERE BE LIGHT!’ proclaim’d the ALMIGHTY LORD,  
Astonish’d Chaos heard the potent word;--  
Through all his realms the kindling Ether runs,  
And the mass starts into a million suns;  
Earths round each sun with quick explosions burst,  
And second planets issue from the first;  
Bend, as they journey with projectile force,  
In bright ellipses their reluctant course;  
Orbs wheel in orbs, round centres centres roll,  
And form, self-balanced, one revolving Whole.  
-Onwards they move amid their bright abode,  
Space without bound, THE BOSOM OF THEIR GOD!”<sup>230</sup>

The fact that man could explain gravity by no means implied that he rejected the revealed truth of God.<sup>231</sup> In fact, until the seventeenth century, the Church had not only tolerated the reasoned observation of nature, but had encouraged it as a weapon against atheism and scepticism.<sup>232</sup> The Bible itself invited objective investigation.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that

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<sup>229</sup> Akenside, 1808, p.305.

<sup>230</sup> Darwin, 1791, pp.9-10, ll.103-114.

<sup>231</sup> Brooke, 1974, p.8.

<sup>232</sup> Webb, 1996, p.18.

are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”<sup>233</sup>

The rediscovery of this philosophical tradition, which regarded both observation and Revelation as based on the common ground of reason, challenges the concept of a secularised Enlightenment.<sup>234</sup> The origin of Natural Theology lies with Aristotle, who saw a connection between the Creator and the Created. In the Middle Ages, the Greek philosophers were branded “godless” and considered a danger to the Church, but Thomas Aquinas Christianised Aristotle’s ideas by synthesising faith and knowledge.<sup>235</sup> John Milton promoted Natural Theology further in the seventeenth century, praising the observation of nature as a means to make individuals comprehend the greatness of God.<sup>236</sup> Isaac Newton (1642-1727) presented his breakthroughs in natural philosophy with the same argument that knowledge did not challenge the authority of God, but rather increased it by making humankind aware of the wonders of, and the genius behind, Creation.<sup>237</sup> The seventeenth-century physicists stimulated a fashion for studying nature in connection with religious thought. Newton further supported the application of the relationship between the Creator and the natural world to moral theory. He maintained that the mechanics of the universe gave clues about the nature of its designer.<sup>238</sup> In his *Opticks*, first published in 1704, he suggested that moral philosophy could improve if the new insights of natural philosophy were taken into account.

“If men could understand through the increasing perfection of natural philosophy the complex nature and intentions of the First Cause, what power He has over men and what benefits they receive from Him, so

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<sup>233</sup> Romans 1:18-20.

<sup>234</sup> Elliott-Binns, 1953; Bebbington, 1989, p.20, makes the doctrine of assurance the centre of his argument and states that “The Evangelical version of Protestantism was created by the Enlightenment.” Haakonssen states, “A quarter of a century ago Peter Gay presented the Enlightenment as ‘the rise of modern paganism’ [...] In recent years scholars have called into question most aspects of this way of understanding the Enlightenment.” (Haakonssen: “Enlightened Dissent: an Introduction”, in: Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and Religion*, 1996, p.1). Ditchfield, 1998, follows along these lines.

<sup>235</sup> Southern, 1993, pp.14, 66.

<sup>236</sup> Milton, 1910, book III, p.94, ll.700-713, gives an account of Creation which is comparable to Erasmus Darwin’s.

<sup>237</sup> Brooke, 1991, pp.157-158.

<sup>238</sup> Everett, 1994, pp.12-13, quotes Newton’s *Opticks*, 4th edition (London, 1730) book III, pp.380-382.

their duty towards Him as well as towards one another would appear ‘by the light of nature’”<sup>239</sup>

Newton argued that understanding nature was a way of understanding one’s Christian duties, writing, “if natural Philosophy in all its Parts [...] shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will be also enlarged.”<sup>240</sup>

Sharing the churchmen’s eagerness for natural philosophy, John Russell never tired of observing what he thought were God’s traces in nature. The most visible expressions of the artist’s fascination with the natural world are his pastels, observational sketches, globes, and engravings of the moon. By pursuing a combined interest in scripture and experiment, he did nothing new or singular, but rather, inspired by the Evangelical belief in the compatibility of Revelation and observation as natural and harmonious, he followed the contemporary trend of employing the advancing empirical methods. A series of short essays entitled *On Christian Philosophy*, which appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine* in 1793 and 1794, reflect Russell’s Natural Theology. These essays offer an explanation of the purpose of Russell’s studies of nature. The introductory chapter begins with a reflection on the Bible’s authorisation of Natural Theology.

“ ‘If the invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things that appear,’ and if the Heavens were inexcusable for not attending to them aright, it must certainly be the duty of Christians, who have the Bible in their hands, so to observe the wonderful works of God, that they may give him the glory due to his name.”<sup>241</sup>

The text continues, stating that a Christian draws nearer to God by understanding His Creation.

“ ‘See that thou magnify his works which men behold,’ is an injunction with divine authority: But a superficial observation of them is

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Porter, 2000, p.161, quotes from Newton’s *Opticks* (London, 1721) Query 31.

<sup>241</sup> *EM*, 1793, Vol.1 p.22.

insufficient. God, who has filled the universe with a vast variety of beings, has confined to man the superior ability of investigating their properties and design”.<sup>242</sup>

The pious reader is further discouraged from believing the assumption that natural philosophy and religion exclude one another. The author states, “True philosophy is far from being inimical to religion.”<sup>243</sup> To back up this point, he reminds the reader of those natural philosophers who “consecrated their powers and their discoveries to the honour of their Maker.”<sup>244</sup> Newton appears as the prime example.<sup>245</sup>

The authorship of the essays *On Christian Philosophy* is uncertain, because the texts are merely signed “Consector”. It is however very likely that John Russell was their author. Russell’s biographer George C. Williamson noted that the artist was a member of the *Evangelical Magazine*’s original committee<sup>246</sup> and that “Three of the short articles in the earlier issues are said to have been from Russell’s pen”.<sup>247</sup> The artist remained involved with the magazine through the publication of engravings after his portraits of Evangelicals. Williamson explained, “from the first, arrangements were made with him that his portraits of divines might be engraved for the successive monthly illustrations.”<sup>248</sup> Russell’s involvement with the *Evangelical Magazine* is furthermore concordant with his personal beliefs. The magazine’s editorial board consisted of Independents, missionary Baptists, and Calvinist Methodists – the very people Russell preferred to surround himself with in his private and professional life.<sup>249</sup>

Besides these points, which make Russell the probable author of *On Christian Philosophy*, the artist shared the philosophy expressed in the essays of a

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. The list includes the key names of Natural Theology. “But we have the pleasure of reflecting, that many others, inferior to none in learning and ability, have consecrated their powers and their discoveries to the honour of their Maker. The names of Sir Isaac Newton, Mr. Derham, Mr. Tay, Mr. Boyle, and others, will readily occur to every intelligent reader.”

<sup>246</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.95, wrote, “In 1793 Russell was warmly interested in the foundation of the ‘Evangelical Magazine’.”

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Walsh, 1965, p.297; Hindmarsh, 1996, p.314. Apart from the *Evangelical Magazine* existed at the time the *Protestant Dissenters Magazine*, which was heavier reading than the “conspicuously undoctinal and unpolitical” (Walsh, 1965, p.297) *EM*. John Wesley’s *Arminian Magazine*, in 1798 renamed *Methodist Magazine*, was a Arminian version. The *EM* itself was born from the ashes of the anti-Arminian *Gospel Magazine*.

God who is visible in nature. Conspector states that an investigation of nature is beneficial to the Christian, as it leads to contemplation and directs the mind towards God. Russell repeatedly recorded that he had done just that when he contemplated nature as the work of God. For example, one diary entry reflects how much the sight of the night sky relieved the painter's frequent depression, because he saw God through nature. Russell wrote in 1768,

“Tonight being in the Street I had a sight of the Stars that God was pleas'd to preach to me from, and I had my Soul filled with the Hopes of [...] Immortality. O! what a Spiritual thing did I discover Religion to be I found that the End of it was to conform the Soul to Gods Image..”<sup>250</sup>

A visit to Hawkstone, Shropshire, in the summer of 1780 induced similarly contemplative feelings in Russell. Hawkstone was a meeting place of Evangelicals and the home of Sir Richard Hill (1731-1808), who was the Speaker of the House of Commons and a prominent lay supporter of Whitefield. Russell noted in his diary that, while walking in the park, he had “been indulged with the works of the God of nature.”<sup>251</sup> Russell continued this entry by copying a hymn, which he found inscribed in a cavern at Hawkstone. That he copied these verses indicates that the artist's thoughts were similar to Conspector's later descriptions in the *Evangelical Magazine*.

“Whilst all the glories, O my God,  
Through the Creation shine;  
Whilst rocks, and hills, and fertile vales,  
Proclaim thy hand divine;

O may I view with humble heart  
The wonders of they pow'r.

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<sup>250</sup> RD, Vol.2, p.120, 2nd May 1768.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., Vol.8, p.11, 12th August 1780.

Display'd alike in wilder scenes,  
As in each blade and flow'r."<sup>252</sup>

Conspector summarised spiritual experiences, such as the religious contemplation of landscape,

"The Lord has established a wonderful analogy between the natural and the spiritual world. This is a secret known only to them that fear him, but they contemplate it with pleasure; and almost every object they see, when they are in a right frame of mind, either leads their thoughts to Jesus, or tends to illustrate some scriptural truth or promise."<sup>253</sup>

This first chapter has attempted to outline the religious and philosophical background of John Russell's life as a Methodist. The few art historians who have studied his work have continued to stumble against the supposed dichotomy in his character between eccentric Methodist and conservative member of society. This unsolved problem made a satisfactory analysis of Russell's work impossible. This chapter proposes a revised view of Russell's position in society, arguing that the artist was a firm believer in the authority of the Church of England, and that he was furthermore a staunch royalist as well as a dutiful member of the Royal Academy. Like other Evangelicals, Russell stressed the authority of the Bible as the tool of God's disclosure of Himself to humankind. This focus on Revelation was complemented by the observation of nature, which he, as well as many other Revivalists, regarded as the reification of the revealed message. During Russell's lifetime, methodological and technological advances drove an examination of nature, through which the Revivalists believed humankind could come closer to the Creator and understand His instructions on how to live according to His will. It was, so Natural Theologians argued, the task of civilisation to find the patterns of universal order in nature and to apply them to society. The following three chapters investigate Russell's work, taking this formative background into account. The different aspects of his oeuvre, which consists of portraits, fancy pictures, and

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid. This hymn was also printed in the *EM*, where it is announced with a reference to Richard Hill. "In Sir Richard Hill's park at Hawkstone in Shropshire there is a vast rock, the top of which commands a very romantic and diversified prospect. And in a natural cavern of that rock may be seen the following lines." (*EM*, 1793, p.131)

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, pp.23-24.

studies of subjects of natural philosophy, may at first seem unrelated. However, the artist's philosophy of universal harmony, which historians previously disregarded because of its unpopular religious content, contains the explanation as to why these aspects of Russell's art belong together and how they express, in different ways, the artist's search for God in this world.



# 3

## Evangelical Iconography and Sensibility: Fancy Pictures and Portraits

“...dissolv’d in tears I have been so affected I have been venturing my sorrows in Seighs and groans walking about the streets”.

(John Russell on Whitefield’s death, *Diary*,  
Vol.4, pp.89-91, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1770)

### **Fancy Pictures: The Devout Delicacy of Feeling**

Russell's fancy pictures and portraits display values which were inherent in both the Evangelical Revival and the cult of Sensibility. Far beyond relying exclusively on Evangelical circles, Russell's fancy pictures appealed to a wider, fashionably sensitive society. The same applies to his portraits, particularly to those of children and to those which deploy animals for moral instruction. This chapter attempts an investigation of these aspects of Russell's art. A first parallel between Evangelicalism and Sensibility appears in the shared interests and moral ideals inherent in sentimental literature. The printed word was well suited to carrying ideas quickly and cheaply, and hymnbooks and novels were the vehicles which allowed Sentimental and Evangelical notions to spread.<sup>254</sup> John Wesley even encouraged Methodists to read appropriately edited Sentimental novels, because they conveyed the moral values of Methodism.<sup>255</sup> Laurence Sterne (1713-68) demonstrated that nonconformist preaching and the sentimental novel had much in common when he preached a sermon that he had written for the fictitious *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) to a real congregation in York Minster.<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, the sentimental novels shared the Revival's relative ambivalence to religious controversy, focussing on the well-being of the soul.<sup>257</sup>

Another reason why these two aspects of eighteenth-century British culture were so compatible is that women played a key role in both the consumption of sentimental literature and the spreading of the Revival.<sup>258</sup> There is indeed a striking resemblance between the fainthearted women of sensibility and the fainting convert virgins of Methodism. Women, as well as reading the greater part of sentimental literature, began to emerge as writers themselves. Fictional heroines inspired and touched their female readers. Among Russell's works is the 1777 portrait of the heroine of Nicholas Rowe's play *The Tragedy of Jane Shore*, which was first performed in 1713 (fig.8). The story is based on the life of a medieval royal mistress, and the play itself dates from the time before Sensibility was fashionable. However, at the time Russell painted the picture, the play was attractive to the culture of Sensibility. The popularity of the story is illustrated by the fact that 'Jane

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<sup>254</sup> Ditchfield, 1998, p.99.

<sup>255</sup> Barker-Benfield, 1992; p.267. Davie, 1978, p.48.

<sup>256</sup> Barker Benfield, 1992, pp.72, 261.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p.258; Beasley, 1982, p.17; Barker-Benfield, 1992, p.259.

<sup>258</sup> Barker-Benfield, 1992, p.271.

Shore' was one of the most successful roles for the famous actress Sarah Siddons (1755-1831). Russell's depiction of Jane Shore is tailor-made for the sensibility market. He shows her as a young beauty, covered in a veil and with her eyes downcast. She wears a cross round her neck and holds a candle in her hand. As a role model Jane Shore signifies the faithful woman who sacrifices everything for her faithless lover. Russell's image epitomises the fashionable combination of female religiosity with sentimental literature.

The sentimental, pious woman became such a stereotype that pamphlets and satires feasted on the polarisation between the 'reasonable men' and 'emotionally unstable women' who were prone to reading novels and listening to preachers.<sup>259</sup> However, this polemic exaggeration of differences did not hinder an opposite trend, which contrasted the male, reasoning egoist with the "man of feeling", from emerging. This phrase was coined by Henry Mackenzie with his homonymous cult book of 1771. This sentimental type of man had a tender heart and displayed ready benevolence.<sup>260</sup> This sensitive aspect of the male character entered portraiture and alluded to male sensitivity through a decidedly feminine iconography.<sup>261</sup> One example of this is Wright of Derby's "Sir Brooke Boothby" (1781). The sitter, contemplating Rousseau, is shown in the reclining posture traditionally associated with the iconography of the reclining Venus.<sup>262</sup> The same tendency towards the harmonisation of the iconography of the sexes can be observed in standing postures. Male and female portraits develop increasingly similar attitudes, as can be seen in Gainsborough's "Captain Wade" (1771) and "Countess Howe" (1764).<sup>263</sup>

Widespread effeminacy was only one expression of the impact of Sensibility on society as a whole, and on Evangelicals.<sup>264</sup> Without Sensibility, some argued, the Evangelical Revival might not have taken place at all. Sydney Dimond characterised the aim of Evangelicals as the wish "to create an atmosphere of contagious emotion and suggestibility, in which worldly reason, the counsels of selfish prudence and

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<sup>259</sup> See p.43 for satires on Whitfield. See also E.G. D'Oench, 1999, pp.52-55, on the mockery of the excited, novel reading woman, who was accused of masturbation. The anonymous engraving "The Contemplative Charmer" (1786) depicts a woman reader in the park holding Hervey's *Meditations* in her right, while her left hand disappears in her skirt. (D'Oench, 1999, pp.52-55) Russell's painting carefully avoids dubious posture and dress. See also Todd, 1986, p.8; Everett, 1994, p.58; D'Oench, 1999, p.275 (FN28).

<sup>260</sup> Shawe-Taylor, 1990, p.69.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Rosenthal, 1999, p.242.

<sup>264</sup> On the criticism of effeminacy see Brewer, 1995, pp.356-357.

material welfare are inhibited, and the audience reduced to a state of relative primitive credulity.”<sup>265</sup> If a person could be convinced that it was his or her duty to believe and if that person could also assume that the remainder of the congregation already believed, and if then the emotional scene was set, it was easy for that person to be converted.<sup>266</sup> In creating an atmosphere of contemplative reflection and contagious emotion, nonconformity clearly overlapped with Sensibility. G.J. Barker-Benfield’s statement that religious conversion was “created out of the literacy, religion, consumerism, and gender values”, that it was a “conversion of manners”, reinforces this alliance.<sup>267</sup>

John Russell’s own life illustrates how well the renewed piety of the Revival merged with sentimental literature’s emphasis on sincere feeling. He himself was a “man of feeling”, as the emotional reflections in his diary show. He belonged to the type who Janet Todd described as a “sensitive, benevolent man whose feelings are too exquisite for the acquisitiveness, vulgarity and selfishness of the world.”<sup>268</sup> When George Whitefield left for America in 1769 Russell’s diary notes record the writer’s sadness. One of the most distressed entries Russell ever made was his reaction to “the Painful news” of Whitefield’s death, which “at first struck me so violently as to chill the Blood in my Veins – but I have good reason to believe it is mear [sic] report God grant that it may be----”.<sup>269</sup> Russell endured the following days which seemed like nightmares. During the nights he records that he “found great Pain upon the News which I cou’d not help being troubled with.” The physical effects of his distress were,

“a trembling and nervous relaxment that has scarce been shook of since --  
- But at Chapel the sad news was confirm’d to night to the audience  
dissolv’d in tears I have been so affected I have been venturing my  
sorrows in Seighs and groans walking about the streets”<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Dimond, 1926, p.117, refers to James Bissett Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, 1921, p.190, but the quotation is in Dimond’s words.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Barker-Benfield, 1992, p.250.

<sup>268</sup> Janet Todd, 1986, p.4.

<sup>269</sup> RD, Vol.4, p.89, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1770.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., pp.89-91, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1770. Russell repeatedly denied the reality of Whitefield’s death and hoped for the truth of those rumours which maintained that the preacher was still alive. Russell wrote that he had “not heard the melancholy particulars yet but that his Death was sudden as he was going to preach – I cannot put down a small bean of Vain hope that he is yet alive”. (ibid.). As late as December he wrote that “the Death of Mr Whitefield is greatly suspected to be false by the Trustees of his Chapel that the account has not been yet confirm’d [sic] and that it was written by an unknown Person – My mind has been pleasingly agitated with the Hope that this great instrument of God still dwells on Earth. O that this may be true” (ibid., p.14, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1770).

John Brewer points out that the idea of suffering, and of enduring this suffering, such a common theme in sentimental literature, mirrors the sacrifice of Christ and was therefore also essentially Evangelical.<sup>271</sup> As much as Russell lived intensely through joyful days and experienced great happiness when content in his religion, he relished the pain induced by the failure to comply with what he demanded of himself. This extremity of emotion, as expressed in the artist's diary, places him at the heart of Sensibility. Considering the wide reaching interaction between Sensibility, religion, and society, it is not surprising that a Methodist painter could accommodate sentimental as well as Evangelical values. Art, in Russell's view, could induce benevolence and "delicacy of feeling", and could therefore serve society by inspiring moral goodness.<sup>272</sup> This declared goal was in accordance with Russell's unfeigned sentimental character and his Methodist religiosity.

Researchers traditionally expressed little interest in the linking of fashion and Evangelicalism in sentimental art. This reluctance may originate from the misconception that eighteenth-century British artists were still under the influence of the Puritanical suspicion of images in connection with religion. The equating of such notions of Puritanical iconoclasm with the Evangelical Revival's rejection of worldly and blasphemous pleasures prevented an objective investigation of Britain's eighteenth-century Evangelical art.<sup>273</sup> However, the primary sources offer abundant proof that many Evangelical Revivalists embraced art. The preacher and song writer Philip Doddridge (1702-51), for example, wrote excitedly and approvingly about Hogarth's paintings.<sup>274</sup> Later in the century, Hannah More (1745-1833), that representative of conservative Evangelicalism, described art as not only acceptable, but useful. This useful influence, she maintained, extended even to religious subjects. When she visited Joshua Reynolds he showed her his version of "St. John in the Wilderness" and one of his "Samuel" pictures.<sup>275</sup> On Reynolds' report that some people did not know who Samuel was, she recommended that he "get someone to make an Oratorio of Samuel, and then it would not be vulgar to confess they knew something of him." She continued with a declaration of her admiration for the painter and his works.

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<sup>271</sup> Brewer, 1997, pp.118-120.

<sup>272</sup> See Introduction, p.15.

<sup>273</sup> Brewer, 1995, pp.242-243.

<sup>274</sup> Rosenthal, 1999, p.282 (FN77).

<sup>275</sup> Postle, 1995, p.92.

“He has also done a St. John that bids fair for immortality. I tell him that I hope the poets and painters will at last bring the Bible into fashion and that people will get to like it from taste, though they are insensible to its spirit, and afraid of its doctrines. I love this great genius for not being ashamed to take his subjects from the most unfashionable of all books.”<sup>276</sup>

While, as Postle points out, Reynolds’ motivation for painting these images was the promotion of the Old Masters rather than an attempt to advertise the Bible,<sup>277</sup> More’s reflection nevertheless indicates that art and Evangelicalism were indeed compatible. The fact that John Venn kept a picture of Mary anointing Christ’s feet in his study, is another indication that Evangelicals not only approved of art outside a demonstratively religious context, but that they admitted even straight forward religious paintings.<sup>278</sup> However, while Benjamin West produced masses of canvasses with Biblical themes in the later eighteenth century, history painting was not the most popular genre for religious painters at the time in Britain. Russell painted very few religious history pieces. The painter’s diploma presentation work “Ruth and Naomi” (1788) is a rare example (fig.9). Fancy pictures represented a much more modern form of religious art.

Fancy pictures, which might be described as sentimentalised images of anonymous, often poor figures which frequently contain a more or less obvious morality, became popular in England in the first half of the eighteenth century. The immigrant Frenchman Philip Mercier (c.1689-1760) brought a new genre to the English market. This was his own tailor-made versions of that which had developed on the continent over the previous three centuries.<sup>279</sup> Caravaggio (c.1571-1610), by depicting his street models with their dirty feet, made a first step towards the sympathetic representation of low class society. The northern imitators of that Italian pioneer carried his approach further. Another influence on the development of the fancy picture was the art of the Low Countries, with the imagery of the poor by artists such as Frans Hals (c.1582-1666) and Rembrandt (1606-69). The Spaniard Murillo’s (c.1617-82) variation on the motif had a direct influence on art in Britain,

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<sup>276</sup> Hannah More, form Roberts, 1834, Vol.i, pp.71-72.

<sup>277</sup> Postle, 1995, p.92.

<sup>278</sup> Hennell, 1958, p.133.

<sup>279</sup> Postle, 1995, pp.77-79.

where his works were extensively collected throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>280</sup> Russell succeeded Murillo in the tradition of fancy pictures. Murillo's religious child images, such as his "St. John with Lamb" (fig.60), show similarities with Russell's moralising pictures.

Russell exhibited over forty fancy pictures, such as "Girl with Cherries" (1781) (fig.10), at the Royal Academy exhibitions.<sup>281</sup> In this example the young sitter faces the viewer with big eyes and a smile, her head tilted to the left. She is depicted in half-length, wearing a white dress, and holding a basket with cherries in her left hand, while presenting some of the fruit to the viewer with her right hand. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Williamson considered this "well known" painting Russell's most beautiful fancy picture. He recorded that it received the "place of honour" in the pastel room of the Louvre, where it had gone by bequest in 1870.<sup>282</sup> Art historians of the twentieth century however were hardly interested in the pastel and the numerous other fancy pictures by Russell's hand. They conceived of Russell's colours as gaudy, of the body language as over-emotional, and, as a result, of Russell's fancy pictures as low art and unworthy of investigation. However, the genre that consists of the "life-sized portrayals of cherubic children, ragged street urchins, winsome market women, and poor old beggars"<sup>283</sup> has been studied where works by more famous artists were concerned. Gainsborough's "Girl with Pigs" (1782) (fig.11) and Reynolds' "Cupid as a Link Boy" (1774) (fig.12) are more subdued in colour and more emotionally reserved than was typical for Russell's fancy pictures. They were therefore considered to be of higher quality.<sup>284</sup> However, this misjudgement of Russell's fancy pictures as low art is a reflection of their latter-day obsolescence rather than of the quality of the paintings in their contemporary context. There is no reason why these images should not be treated seriously, as in Russell's day they were indubitably valued, as exhibition reports in the contemporary London press show.<sup>285</sup> Indeed, the very sentimentality of Russell's fancy pictures, that made them unfashionable to later generations, had made them a

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<sup>280</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, p.6.

<sup>281</sup> See Appendix 2. The number of fancy pictures in Russell's oeuvre is only surpassed by that of his portraits. A distinction of fancy pictures and portraits is however not always possible, because the simple loss of the knowledge of a portrait sitter's identity might lead to that image being regarded as a fancy picture today.

<sup>282</sup> RA. 1781, bequeathed to the Louvre in 1870 by a Mr. Vickery, see Williamson, 1894, p.153.

<sup>283</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, p.5.

<sup>284</sup> Crown, 1984, p.159. While Patricia Crown acknowledged that John Opie (1761-1807) and Richard Westall (1765-1836) painted them too, she does not mention Russell.

<sup>285</sup> See Introduction, pp.13-14.

success with his contemporaries. Increasingly embodying the ideals, which spread through the sentimental literature of the time, like benevolence, tenderness, piety, and chastity, this genre attracted an audience within polite culture.<sup>286</sup> In Russell's "Girl with Cherries" the action is reduced to the girl offering the cherries. This gesture, together with her radiant, innocent presence, would lead the contemporary viewer to reflect on the scene as one of beauty, of pure and unspoiled childhood. This could lead to religious reflections, which saw childhood as the best state of humanity. Despite the Puritanical inheritance and an undeniable caution in matters of vanity, painting was clearly seen by some Evangelicals as a means of spreading the Revival.

### **The Deserving Poor**

The imagery of the deserving poor exemplifies why fancy pictures were a genre ideally suited to conveying the Evangelical message. Fancy pictures represented a morality which was fed by religiously inspired compassion and a sentimental feeling for the unfortunate. The viewer could approach them in a much more private way than would have been the case with the formality of historical canvasses. Andrew tellingly wrote that the "public rhetoric of need, a rhetoric couched in religious terms" also embraced "a range of emotional triggers".<sup>287</sup> Among the most important of the shared values was benevolence. It features in Russell's "Filial Affection" (1786) (fig.13).<sup>288</sup> This pastel depicts two beggars, one of whom is a young girl in worn out clothes, who stretches out her hand and pathetically fixes her eyes on the viewer. She stands next to a seated old man whose hands are folded in prayer while his bearded head rests on his chest. The title suggests that he is the girl's father. If the picture is to be understood, one has to consider the contemporary reception of beggars. The complex range of views on beggars during the late eighteenth century reached from conceiving of them as dangerous, antisocial elements, to seeing them

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<sup>286</sup> The term "sensibility" is, and has been to Russell's contemporaries, imprecise. It implied various aspects of feeling and emotion. Through Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768) the words "sentimentality" and "sensibility" became interchangeable. The Literature of Sensibility peaked from the mid eighteenth century until the late 1770s, but it carried on after that, moving into Gothic fiction. Todd, 1986, pp.3-9, 21-28, 49-52; Barker-Benfield, 1992; Brewer, 1997, esp. pp.113-122; Porter, 2000, chapter 12: "From Good Sense to Sensibility", pp.381-94.

<sup>287</sup> Andrew, 1998, p.101.

<sup>288</sup> The painting was exhibited at the Academy in 1786. First executed in pastel (38x29") this images was on show as no.427. Russell executed another version in oil (32 ½ x27 ½ ").



as harmless, pitiable creatures. John Wesley, for example, recognised the afflictions of Christ in the suffering of the poor.<sup>289</sup> One of Doddridge's hymns, "Jesus, my Lord, how rich thy grace", reflects the same spirit, and claims that beggars are Christ's "partners".

"But Thou hast Brethren here below,  
The Partners of thy Grace,  
And wilt confess their humble Names  
Before the Father's Face.

In them Thou may'st be cloth'd, and fed,  
And visited and cheer'd;  
And in their Accents of Distress  
My Saviour's Voice is heard.

Thy Face with Rev'rence and with Love  
I in thy Poor would see;  
O rather let me beg my Bread,  
Than hold it back from Thee."<sup>290</sup>

The reasoning behind this identification with the poor was that beggars could only exist because God had sanctified their poverty. To relieve the misery of the poor, the same God had installed compassion in the richer part of society. A neglect of charity would therefore be little short of disobedience to God. For example, the Rev. E. Radcliff argued, that the "world is constituted so as to require the mutual intercourse of charity for its subsistence, and the mutual stations and characters of human life are admirably diversified to promote and encourage it." Radcliff evoked a harmonious system in which the "rich are moved with compassion while they are relieving distress, and the poor are melted into gratitude, while they are supplied with good."<sup>291</sup>

While Evangelicals were preaching benevolence, a fashion for helping the helpless established itself in the second half of the eighteenth century. This was

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<sup>289</sup> Ditchfield, 1998, p.84, quotes from Walsh, 1994, pp.16-17.

<sup>290</sup> Doddridge, 1773, p.168, Hymn no. 188, verses 3-5.

<sup>291</sup> Rev. E. Radcliff: *The Charitable Man the best Oeconomist, Patriot, and Christian. A Sermon preached at St. Thomas's Southwark, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1761* (London, 1761), pp.6-8, quoted in Rosenthal, 1999, p.228.

manifested in increased efforts to help beggars and street children, repenting prostitutes, slaves, and tortured animals. Privately founded hospitals were founded, the prison reform movement gained more and more supporters, and protests against executions increased. Compassion was particularly strong for those unhappy creatures who were deemed to deserve it.<sup>292</sup> The *History of the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green*, which dates back to the time of Henry VI and appeared in innumerable reprints into the nineteenth century, is only one example of the popularity of the notion of the deserving poor. The story describes how a man, who “got his blindness in fighting for the honour of his country”,<sup>293</sup> was forced into begging. However, the patriotic manner by which he acquired his injury ensured that he did not suffer from a shortage of donations, as people gave “very liberally” to such a deserving man. In fact, people gave so freely that the blind man was inspired to sing,

“A Beggar leads a merry life,  
And hath both wealth and ease;  
His days are free from care and strife  
He doth whate’er he please.”<sup>294</sup>

The story tells of the beggar becoming a rich man and being blessed with a beautiful and virtuous wife. After he gives his, even more beautiful and virtuous, daughter to a worthy knight he reveals that he is a man of pedigree himself. Finally he promises “to leave off the begging trade, and to live upon what he had got”.<sup>295</sup> Of course, beggars could not realistically expect to be showered with money and respect. However, the implication of stories like this is that virtue and piety could rescue a person who had been hurled into poverty, as the real case of William Fischer illustrates. A fire had robbed him of his two children, his health, and his possessions.

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<sup>292</sup> Parallel to the ideal of a compassionate society existed the notion that the real motor of society was self-interest. Though they appear to be opposites, compassion and self-interest, could be part of one and the same person. (Brewer, 1997, p.115; *ibid.*, 1995, p.346) While benevolence was ascribed to the private part of a person’s life, the public part could display self-interest. Hume was convinced that “the sympathetic virtues flourished best under conditions of commercial opulence”. In his *On Luxury* (1752) he states that the more luxury there is, the better the arts and refined behaviour could flourish. However, in order to keep the system stable, excess levels of luxury had to be avoided. (Solkin, 1993, p.157, quotes from Hume: *On Luxury* (later renamed *Of Refinement in the Arts*), in: *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E.F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1987) p.271. Values taught in the novels of Sensibility, such as restraint and benevolence, made self-interest governable.

<sup>293</sup> Anon., c.1760, p.6.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

Fischer appealed for help with a begging letter, which was published alongside countless others in the contemporary newspapers. On the honest, unfortunate man's account, charitable generosity amassed the considerable sum of £100.<sup>296</sup>

The theme of the deserving beggar was very popular throughout the eighteenth and featured in innumerable ballads. Isaac Watts' (1674-1748) *Divine Songs* contains *The Beggar's Petition*, which invites the reader to be charitable towards "a poor old man", as his sad current state was no fault of his own.

"Heaven sends misfortunes; why should we repine?  
'Tis Heaven has brought me to the state you see;  
And your condition may be soon like mine,  
The child of sorrow and of misery."<sup>297</sup>

A beggar's innocence in his own misery was central to the charity-worthiness of the individual in question. The begging letters tell of the "lowest degree of poverty" to which some unfortunate souls had sunk "by unavoidable misfortune", and not through idleness or other kinds of immoral behaviour.<sup>298</sup> This is illustrated too in the story of the gypsy child Madge Blarney, which was published in the second half of the 1790s in the Clapham Sect's chapbook, the *Cheap Repository*.<sup>299</sup> Madge is repentant of her godless life and, in defiance of her mother's immoral influence, wants to become a pious person. This moral quality eventually leads her to a happy end.<sup>300</sup> Russell's "Filial Affection" depicts such deserving poor. The young and beautiful daughter displays true "filial affection" by sacrificing the chance to find work for herself and staying with her helpless father. The girl is looking straight at the viewer, drawing attention to her clean and innocent face. The father's bent head indicates his shame at the sad situation, but the fact that his body is half turned towards the viewer also suggest that he relies on the charity given to him. His folded hands indicate piety. The image would have been perceived by contemporary viewers as an unmistakable reminder of their Christian duty to give charitably to

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<sup>296</sup> Andrew, 1998, p.90.

<sup>297</sup> Watts, 1971, pp.70-71 (of the facsimile part), pp.270-271 of the 1971 pages. This song was added in the late eighteenth century, by Thomas Moss (?1741-1808), but it was printed without a comment on another authorship than Watts' (Watts, 1971, pp.2-3).

<sup>298</sup> Andrew, 1998, p.95.

<sup>299</sup> Major Donors include Martin Madan, William Wilberforce, and Henry Thornton who, among other charities, supported the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor. (Andrews, 1989, pp.209, 223, 224)

<sup>300</sup> Pickering, 1981, pp.121-126.

those in need. Russell made this appeal strongly with the girl's outstretched hand and her fixing of the viewer with direct looks.

Not all painters who made the poor the focus of emotional attention in their paintings meant to campaign for the improvement of their sitters' living conditions. Reynolds' treatment of the poor whom he regarded as ready and convenient models, leaving them waiting on standby for hours and slotting them in at random between sessions with paying sitters, suggests that he was not particularly compassionate towards them.<sup>301</sup> While Russell did not comment on his own paintings of the poor, he is likely to, in tune with his philosophy of art's "beneficial influence in Society, in promoting benevolence, and inspiring delicacy of feeling",<sup>302</sup> have wanted to promote charity. Primary sources demonstrate the artist's concern for his contemporaries and evoke a compassionate man, who was first and foremost anxious for their spiritual well-being. On one occasion, the artist recorded in his diary that he had been "sent for by my dear friend Mr. Groves to draw his expiring [sic] daughter the poor afflicted man desired me to pray with him which I was enabled to comply with in much power."<sup>303</sup> Russell repeatedly kept troubled people company. One night he recorded, as "I was in my bedchamber I was alarmed by my master's footman being taken ill by a fright, by hearing, as he thought, an alarm of fire; so as all the family were gone to bed, I sat up with him all night."<sup>304</sup> Russell's responsiveness to his fellow-beings' distress suggests that he was unlikely to have painted his "Filial Affection" without at least a thought of compassion. Reminding the viewers of their responsibilities towards the poor, his paintings can be seen as an active move towards inspiring more charity.

Compared with other painters' imagery of the deserving poor, Russell's painting is more moralising, and therefore appeals more strongly to the viewers' benevolence. William Owen's (1769-1825) painting "The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green", which William Ward (1762-1826) engraved in 1804 (fig.14), is strikingly similar to Russell's "Filial Affection".<sup>305</sup> The composition resembles Russell's work, with the seated old man to the right and the young girl standing beside him to the left, stretching out one hand towards the viewer. However, while Russell's

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<sup>301</sup> Postle, 1995, p.69; Crown, 1984.

<sup>302</sup> Russell, 1777, p.i.

<sup>303</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.173, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1773.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.102, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1767.

<sup>305</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, pp.94-95.

image is one of sentimental appeal, a stoical distance dominates this scene by Owen. This air of detachment originates from the girl's cold, rigid frontal view. Similarly, the old man, seen in profile, appears withdrawn. In comparison, Russell turned his beggar more towards the viewer, and, in doing so, represented him as a more accessible figure. The distanced atmosphere that characterises Owen's painting is also present in Zoffany's (1733-1810) "Beggars on the Road to Stanmore" (1771) (fig.15), which might have been an inspiration for both Owen's and Russell's paintings. The family in Zoffany's picture, which consists of a man, a woman, and two children, is crouched together in a close group. The composition of the breastfeeding woman, together with the kneeling, male figure, bears more than a fleeting resemblance to traditional holy family iconography. This association with the poverty of Christ and his parents gives the group a quasi-holy status.<sup>306</sup> However, none of the sitters are looking at the viewer, and all figures are fully shown within the frame, as a distanced group that is quite separate from the world of the viewer. By comparison, Owen depicted his figures in a far more engaging way, with the girl's direct look and the figures' three quarter lengths. However, the viewer finds the beggars closest to him in Russell's image, where they are depicted in half length and with the greatest immediate closeness. In contrast to Owen's and Zoffany's portrayal of the poor Russell presented the more emotional engagement with the subject.

Russell's fancy pictures illustrate the mutual social contentment that the Rev. Radcliff had dreamed of, where beggars gratefully received what the rest of society benevolently gave. "Love Songs and Matches" (1793) is an idealised image of the child who is worthy of charity (fig.16). Echoing the girl in "Filial Affection", the ragged boy engages through direct looks with the viewer. His head is tilted to the left and radiates a pitiable expression. Again, the face is clean and sweet, and perfectly beautiful with round cheeks and a sensual mouth. The face is framed with thick, healthy hair. A dog accompanies him and, by lifting its front paws, reinforces the appeal. The charity-worthiness of the boy, which is already indicated through the virtuous face, is much increased by his occupation. While the beggar's daughter in "Filial Affection" could not have left her father alone and so was restricted to begging, the boy is trying to make his own way through labour. He is not idly stretching out his hand, but is trying his best to deserve charity. Any donations, the

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<sup>306</sup> Webster, 1976, p.49.

image implies, would further him in his laudable efforts to become a useful member of society. Indeed, Russell depicted children busying themselves with making or selling more frequently than he did begging scenes.<sup>307</sup> Examples like “The little Lace Makers” (R.A. 1790) and “St. Giles Songstress” (1802) repeat the features, which characterise the above-mentioned paintings. The rugs hardly conceal the children’s beauty and virtue, and the sitters seek direct eye contact with the viewer (figs. 17, 18).

During Russell’s lifetime, the philanthropic effort that went into organised work and schooling, including Sunday-schools,<sup>308</sup> was not so much inspired by the new feelings of responsibility towards children that had been introduced by Rousseau, as by the need, in the words of Watts, “to teach the duties of humility and submission to superiors.”<sup>309</sup> Maybe fancy pictures themselves had their ultimate function in providing reassurance, that widespread benevolence could prevent any mischief that might otherwise arise from “idle Hands”.<sup>310</sup> Russell’s songstress was accordingly associated by Algernon Graves, in his list of paintings exhibited by Russell, with the traditional Sussex country song of a beggar girl.

“Call me not ‘lazy-back beggar’ and ‘bold enough,’  
Fain would I learn to both knit and to sew;  
I’ve two little brothers at home, when they’re old enough  
They will work hard for the gifts you bestow.”<sup>311</sup>

Work was considered to be an important requirement which, if fulfilled, made people respectable in society and, if poor, worthy of charity. Accordingly, Isaac Watts provided his wide child-readership with the following warning.

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<sup>307</sup> No comprehensive record of Russell’s works exists. New pictures by Russell constantly appear on the art market and more relevant material is likely to still emerge in the future. Another of Russell’s paintings of a beggar, which is untraceable today, was exhibited at the R.A. in 1789, no. 256, as “A Dutch Beggar”.

<sup>308</sup> Russell talks about how well the Sunday schools are run in his Leeds diary, pp.9-10. “I saw the Sunday Schools on the moor, near Wood house about one hundred Boys in the other about as many Girls they seem well conducted & are under the immediate inspection of Mr. S(awyer) who took me to see them. If these schools always continue in such hands, much good maybe expected from them.”

<sup>309</sup> Watts quoted in Cunningham, 1991, p.34.

<sup>310</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, p.15.

<sup>311</sup> <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~blaker/index.html>, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004. See Appendix 2, p.206.

“In Works of Labour or of Skill  
I would be busy too:  
For Satan finds some Mischief still  
For idle Hands to do.”<sup>312</sup>

Russell frequently painted poor children at work in rural settings. Images, such as “Harvest Girl”, “Girl with Egg Basket” (both c.1773), and “The Peasant’s little Maid” (c.1788) (figs. 19, 20, 21), all of which were exhibited at the Academy, give an idealised view of the simple and virtuous life of the supposedly happy country poor.<sup>313</sup> The “Peasant’s little Maid”, dressed in threadbare clothes and carrying a loaf, looks at the viewer intensely.<sup>314</sup> Both the “Girl with Egg Basket” and the “Harvest Girl” are based on a similar composition, though their clothes are in a better condition than those of the peasant’s maid. All three feature the idealised faces that are typical of Russell’s work. Less common are the bare shoulders, with which Russell depicted these sitters. This detail coincides with the girls’ dreamy gazes. They are particularly pronounced in the peasant’s maid and the harvest girl, but also in the songstress and one of the lace makers. The possible range of interpretations, from cute to alluring, raises the question of whether Russell intended a sexual dimension in these images.

The presence of sexual undertones in, for example, some of Reynolds’ well known fancy pictures, invites the drawing of parallels to this part of Russell’s work. Reynolds’ “Cupid as a Link Boy” (fig.12) is one of the icons of eighteenth-century child pornography.<sup>315</sup> Paulson identified Reynolds’ allusion of the sexual availability of the nameless poor in the boy’s phallic torch. The subject defers to the popular eighteenth-century myth that intercourse with children cured venereal diseases, an attitude that led to massive child prostitution and further spreading of diseases among the street poor.<sup>316</sup> Lord Rochester’s seventeenth-century attitude towards link

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<sup>312</sup> Watts, “Against Idleness and Mischief”, in *Divine Songs*, 1715, quoted in Cunningham, 1991, p.23. First published in 1715, the work reappeared in numerous editions throughout the century. See also Pickering, 1981, p.17; Crown, 1984, p.164.

<sup>313</sup> The “Harvest Girl” was exhibited in 1780, “Girl with an Egg Basket” in 1781, and “The Peasant’s little Maid” in 1788. Further country side idylls by Russell include “Rural Employment” (RA 1787, no.129, fig.51), “A Cottage Girl in the Sunshine” (RA 1790, no. 274), “Cottage Felicity” (RA 1792, no.384), and “A Cottage Grandfather” (RA 1803, no.203). See Appendix 2.

<sup>314</sup> The original was sold in the sale of Russell’s art works after his death in 1807 as “A girl and loaf. A pleasing subject from rustic life” W. Nutter in 1790 and Huller in 1799 engraved the piece that had been on show at the Academy in 1788. The pastel was for sale at Sotheby’s, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1987, Lot. 116.

<sup>315</sup> Crown, 1984, p.166 (FN10).

<sup>316</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, p.16.

boys, which he expressed in a poem, was still upheld by some of Russell's contemporaries.

“Nor shall our love fits, Chloris be forgot,  
When each the well looked link boy strove to enjoy,  
And the best kiss was the deciding lot  
Whether the boy fucked you, or I enjoyed the boy.”<sup>317</sup>

Reynolds was by no means the only artist to include this sombre aspect of everyday life in his art. A vein of seductive looks and sexual implications was firmly established in early fancy painting in Britain by Philippe Mercier. He painted his “Girl with a Cat” (c.1755) (fig.22) with an almost bare bosom, inviting gaze, and the symbolic black cat, which emphasises the sexual dimension of the image.<sup>318</sup> Russell’s “Peasant’s little Maid” shows a strikingly similar composition. The very sensual leaning of the head and the bare shoulders which feature in Russell’s images would in paintings by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805), for example his undated “Innocence” (fig.23), be interpreted as a clear sexual reference.<sup>319</sup> It is, however, unlikely that Russell intended to sexualise his dreamy, bare-shouldered country girls. The artist depicted his own daughter Jane (1779-1810) in the same way, with sensual lips and half closed eyes (fig.24).<sup>320</sup> Furthermore, considering the artist’s utter rejection of sexuality in any form, which features strongly in his diaries, it is more likely that he saw in the exaggeration of mouths, eyes, and shoulders, as well as in the softness of the features, a means of indicating innocent beauty. The pastel painter’s effective use of his technique to create soft lines, hazy faces, and intense colour gave the pictures the unrivalled emotional intensity that dominates his art.<sup>321</sup>

Evangelicals associated innocent beauty and innocent poverty with the God-given state of goodness. They regarded the deserving beggar as close to Christ, because they shared His conditions of poverty and rejection. Evangelicals were generally very fond of children and considered their state as closer to God than that

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<sup>317</sup> Rochester, *The Disabled Debauchee*, 1680, ll.37-40, quoted in Crown, 1984, p.166 (FN10).

<sup>318</sup> *Angels and Urchins*, pp.68-69.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16. Wallace Collection, London.

<sup>320</sup> The portrait is undated and was on sale at Sotheby’s on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1994.

<sup>321</sup> When Williamson quotes a Mr. Champneys’ comparison of pastel and oil, the softening effect of pastel is singled out as significant, because it lent “itself more easily than any other medium to the reproduction of feminine beauty, and to the exquisite complexion of childhood”. Williamson, 1894, p.87.



of adults. The Bible provides much material on this theme, and it is clearest in Luke 18.

“Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’”<sup>322</sup>

In “The Good Shepherd carrying a Lamb in his Bosom” (1778) the Rev. Henry Peckwell muses on this theme, “Years of maturity do not bring us nearer unto God. Men must be derobed [sic] of self-conceit, fancied acquirements”, and must become like children again, feeling “themselves poor, humble Babes before they seek unto the great Prophet of Souls”.<sup>323</sup> Russell’s painted children radiate this innocence, which the artist, himself a sinning adult, strove for. Despite the fact that Russell accepted the universal taint of original sin, he considered children, with their lack of pride and corruption, and their unrivalled ability to communicate joy, to be much closer to the state of man before the fall. If the sitters were not only young but poor as well, they appealed even more strongly as icons of piety. Russell’s images of the deserving, poor children might have been received by their adult audience as sermons. Russell’s pictures preached of the innocence and virtue which Christians longed for in their struggle to receive the “kingdom of God”.

### **Modesty and Charitable Fame: Methodist Portraits**

One glance through John Russell’s Academy exhibits shows that he mainly painted portraits. Due to his private Methodist connections, both professional and lay Revivalists represent a substantial proportion of his sitters. These portraits, in a way similar to Russell’s fancy pictures of the deserving poor, contain an Evangelical iconography which expresses the religious values held by the sitters. Indeed, the simplest way of indicating a religious conviction of the sitter was the inclusion of the Bible or other religious books in the portrait. Examples of this common occurrence in Russell’s work are the portraits of the Rev. Rowland Hill (1744-1833),

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<sup>322</sup> Luke 18:15-17; see also Mark 10:15.

<sup>323</sup> Peckwell, 1778, p.5.

the Rev. Richard De Courcy (1744-1803), the Baptist minister the Rev. Joseph Gwennap (1731-1813), the Methodist minister in Plymouth, the Rev. Andrew Kinsman (1724-93), and the Independent Minister at Stepney, the Rev. Samuel Brewer (1724-96).<sup>324</sup> Such likenesses of preachers were widespread during the late eighteenth century. Frequently featuring as engravings on the frontispieces of books and in magazines, these images added recognisable faces to the preachers' famous or indeed infamous names. Russell portrayed many of the leading Revivalists and played a considerable part in the employment of art for the Revival cause. One of the great galleries for Russell's Evangelical faces was the *Evangelical Magazine*. The above-mentioned engraving, after Russell's oil portrait of the Rev. Andrew Kinsman, appeared in the very first issue of that publication in 1793.<sup>325</sup> Williamson claims that in "many instances the committee of the *Evangelical Magazine* instructed Russell to paint the portraits of leading Nonconformist divines".<sup>326</sup> However, while it is to be expected that Russell provided a substantial number of portraits, the authorship of most of the likenesses remains as yet unattributable, as the artists of the original paintings are rarely acknowledged. It appears that the portraits had become an essential part of the presentation of a preacher, furthering his cause through his new celebrity status.

Preachers were often enigmatic individuals, charismatic actors on the stage of God, some of whom, by virtue of their personalities, became the leaders of the different branches of the Revival. The success or failure of sermons, or indeed the entire Revival, depended upon their entrancing preaching. David Garrick reputedly envied Whitefield for his ability to make his congregations sob, and the theatre borrowed crowd control techniques from the successful preachers.<sup>327</sup> However, numerous nonconformists considered the preaching of virtue on the one hand, and the celebration of the successful individual on the other hand as a contradiction in terms. The Rev. Martyn reflected pessimistically, "in whatever manner the most holy ministers speak of their success, I am very apt to be disgusted at the prominent character of the instrument."<sup>328</sup> The individual charisma that was so useful in the

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<sup>324</sup> The portrait of Rowland Hill was engraved in 1783, that of De Courcy in 1770. Gwennap's portrait was engraved in 1772 (NPG D2829-2830), Kinsman's in the same year (NPG D3433). An engraving after Brewer's portrait (NPG D804) featured in the *EM* (January 1797).

<sup>325</sup> *EM*, August 1793; Williamson, 1894, p.150. Russell mentioned Kinsman in his diary, for example, RD, Vol.5, p.32, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1771.

<sup>326</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.95.

<sup>327</sup> Baker-Benfield, 1992, pp.72-76. However, Whitefield opposed strongly to the worldly theatre.

<sup>328</sup> Elliott-Binns, 1953, p.431, quoted from Henry Martyn, *Journal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1803.

promotion of Revival ideas clashed with the Evangelical rejection of worldly arrogance. For Russell, the promoting of his sitters' status as celebrities by introducing their likenesses to a wide audience must have been difficult at times. His diary contains repeated expressions of sympathy with the Rev. Martyn's notion of the unimportance of the individual. On one occasion Russell wrote that a sermon could only be truly beneficial if one looked "not in the minister but Over his head".<sup>329</sup> Indeed, the artist's private notes contain abundant evidence for his continuous disciplined, if sometimes unsuccessful, attempts to realise his own "nothingness".<sup>330</sup>

Russell's portrait of the Rev. John Newton from 1788 (fig.25) is typical of Evangelical portraiture. The sitter is shown in conventional third-length, wearing clerical robes, and a powdered wig. Though the iconography of this unspectacular image conformed to Revival notions of modesty, John Newton himself was among those who entertained doubts as to whether portraiture was at all reconcilable with the Evangelical rejection of worldly arrogance. Russell's friend John Bacon had requested Newton's likeness, but only after lengthy discussion did Newton agree to have his portrait taken.<sup>331</sup> The hesitant sitter showed renewed reluctance when it came to the engraving, which he eventually agreed to under the condition "that it should not appear in the print sellers' windows till after his death, when it would no doubt sell advantageously for the benefit of his niece".<sup>332</sup> The reason for Newton's uneasiness with portraiture was very likely a fear of vanity. He would probably have agreed with John Thornton, who demanded that the three lessons a minister should learn were "one, humility, two, humility, three, humility".<sup>333</sup> To Newton, sitting for a portrait, to have one's outer appearance recorded, promoted anything but humility. However, wishing to provide security for his niece, he overcome his reservations. The results were, that, after his death, Newton's niece obtained the handsome proceeds of £700,<sup>334</sup> Bacon received the original image that commemorated a

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<sup>329</sup> This comment was based on Whitefield preaching on Hosea 10:12, "Note! if you Intend to get a blessing under the Word, Look not in the minister but Over his head." RD, Vol.1, p.27, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1766.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, p.4, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1766. See also *ibid.*, p.7, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1766.

<sup>331</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.136.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>333</sup> Moule, 1892, p.65.

<sup>334</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.136.

friendship, and the readers of Newton's works came to associate the words with the author's face.<sup>335</sup>

If George Whitefield had any such reservations, he overcame them. Russell's full-length portrait of circa 1768 (fig.26) exploits the campaigning potential of its sitter. The painting, which is now lost, shows the famous preacher addressing a crowd, which is not pictured, in a field outside London.<sup>336</sup> Whitefield is depicted with wig, bands, and gown, holding the Bible in one hand, and with the other arm outstretched. His head is bent down slightly. The eyes squint into the distance. Whitefield was famous for squinting, and the inclusion of this feature might simply have been to allow the viewer to easily recognise the sitter. However, including this unflattering detail in the portrait is also very much in line with the necessity of humility in Evangelical portraiture. London's National Portrait Gallery possesses a rough cut-out of a Whitefield head in oil by Russell (fig.27), which might be part of this full-figure painting.<sup>337</sup> Whether or not this image is the same as the other one, it certainly makes no secret of the squint. This element of humility does not however undermine the representation of Whitefield as the colossus of Evangelicalism. This effect is achieved mainly by the low horizon and the preacher's towering figure. His posture is one of a classical orator, a master of the art of speech, who overwhelms his audience, while the squint keeps him entirely human, because it freely admits to his frailty. It is a twofold campaigning picture for both the power of the Gospel as well as for the strongest voice the Gospel had in eighteenth-century Britain. Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) admitted that Whitefield's oratorical talent persuaded him to deposit all the money he had on him at the time on the collection plate, while he had originally not intended to give any.

"I happened to attend one of his sermons in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper, three or four silver dollars, and five pistols in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper. Another stroke in his

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<sup>335</sup> Russell's portrait was the most important source for later images of Newton. Williamson, 1894, p.136.

<sup>336</sup> An engraving of the latter shows the preacher, "standing on hillock, facing slightly to left, wig, bands, black gown, right arm stretched, left hand holding Bible, London in distance, St. Paul's to right". (Smith, 1883, No.154)

<sup>337</sup> The portrait's irregular edge and the composition make it likely that the painting was cut out from a bigger canvas, possibly the above mentioned full-length portrait.

oratory determined me to give the silver, and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pockets into the collector's dish."<sup>338</sup>

That this type of likeness of famous preachers was important beyond the ranks of the sitters' supporters, is evident from the fact that it enabled the visual satire of Methodism to be effective. Satires such as Hogarth's "Enthusiasm delineated" and the anonymous "Dr. Squintum's Exaltation of the Reformation" (1763) (figs. 6, 7) mock through an exaggeration of those activities that respectful portraits, such as Russell's, utilised.<sup>339</sup>

A few years after painting Whitefield, Russell portrayed the Countess of Huntingdon (1772) as an allegorical full-length figure (fig.28). The picture shows her dressed in timeless robes and veil, standing in a landscape with an oak tree and a cave, holding a crown of thorns in her hand, and crushing her coronet with her foot.<sup>340</sup> The painting's allegorical message is displayed so clearly that it would have been understood easily by any viewer. Selina Countess of Huntingdon is stamping on worldly power, in the form of her coronet,<sup>341</sup> replacing it confidently with the crown of thorns. While painting the allegorical portrait, Russell confided to his diary that he intended "making the orphan home in Georgia a present" of it.<sup>342</sup> The portrait was engraved and, as Russell had intended, it was sent to Georgia.<sup>343</sup> The grateful regiments of Georgian orphans would have known their benefactress only from the painting. This one painting, however, was designed to teach them the most important lesson of their lives. The right path of the deserving poor, so the allegorical portrait would have dramatically thundered down at them, leads through poverty and pain and leaves the vanities of the world behind. The crown of thorns features in a hymn, which was sung in the Countess' chapels.

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<sup>338</sup> Franklin, *Memoirs*, I, p.85, quoted in Balleine, 1951, p.25.

<sup>339</sup> Miller, 1986, pp.198, 204. Numbers 69 and 72 display Methodists' hypocrisy and greed.

<sup>340</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.45.

<sup>341</sup> Caesare Ripa had recorded this iconographical theme in the early seventeenth century. (Ripa, 1603, p.107)

<sup>342</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.155, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1772. Russell exhibited two pictures of orphans at the RA, the emotional "Orphans visiting their parents' tomb" (RA 1792, No.162) and "Sailor Orphan, whose father lost his life by the explosion of the 'Queen Charlotte' in the Mediterranean" (RA 1806, no.252). These paintings count among the images of the deserving poor.

<sup>343</sup> The engraving was produced by C. Bowles and published by Faden in 1773. Williamson, 1894, p.45, reports that the ship, that carried the pastel to America, was wrecked and the painting was lost. Russell repeated the picture in oil with slightly different drapery, shoes, and tree. This second version reached the orphanage and is now owned by the Bethesda Home for Boys, whom it has been presented to in 1852 by the Trustees of Chatham Academy. It is on show at the Georgia Historical Society.

“See from his Head, his Hands and Feet,  
Sorrow and Love flow mingled down!  
Did e’er such Love and Sorrow meet,  
Or Thorns compose so rich a Crown?”<sup>344</sup>

The portrait would not only preach to the orphans but to the wider public and to women in particular. It preached the rejection of vanity that the Countess exemplified through her own life, by spending her own fortune on the promotion of religion. Hymns that were sung in the Countess’ connection celebrate this rejection of worldliness. There are abundant declarations against “empty Pride” and “deceitful charms”, which have to be “quit for Heav’n above”.<sup>345</sup> “This Soul of mine was never made/ For Vanity”,<sup>346</sup> reads another hymn, and yet another composition declares, “JESU, thy Blood and Righteousness-/My Beauty are, my glorious Dress”.<sup>347</sup> This attitude is inherent in Russell’s chaste and modest depictions of Evangelicals’ wives as modest and pious women. If additional objects are present in their portraits, these are either animals or implements such as books or spinning wheels, which indicate the sitters’ useful occupations. The portraits of Mrs. Hey of Leeds (1800), wife of the surgeon William Hey, and Mrs. Dixon of York (1802) (fig.29) with spinning wheels exemplify this.<sup>348</sup> The fact that Russell’s portraits almost completely lack jewellery might also be due to a fear of vanity.

The demonstrative association of the sitters with religious values did not, however, make them incompatible with fashionable society. Barker-Benfield pointed out that “Methodist austerity in dress became its own distinctive fashion”.<sup>349</sup> When Russell painted the Countess of Huntingdon again shortly after the allegorical portrait, he depicted her, though modestly, as a woman of status (fig.30). Reminiscent of Gainsborough’s portrait of the Duchess of Bedford, Russell’s likeness of the Countess is a polite society portrait.<sup>350</sup> It is fashionable, while at the

<sup>344</sup> Anon., 1773, Hymn 45 *When I survey the wond’rous Cross*, pp.410-411, ll.1-4.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., Hymn 120 *World, adieu! Thou real cheat*, pp.172-174, quotes from ll.2, 11, 13.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., Hymn 35 *O Dearest LORD, take Thou my Heart*, pp.42-43, ll.15-6.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., Hymn 51 *JESU, thy Blood and Righteousness*, p.420, ll.1-2.

<sup>348</sup> The Hey portrait is at Leeds City Art Gallery. Mrs. Dixon’s portrait is at GHG.

<sup>349</sup> Barker-Benfield, 1992, p.268.

<sup>350</sup> The portrait is reminiscent of Gainsborough’s “Duchess of Bedford” (1764). (Rosenthal, 1999, p.240, plate 28) “If virtue was made explicit in the frank and open countenance” then this portrait conforms to it. (Ibid., refers to Hayes: “Gainsborough and the Bedfords”, in: *Connoisseur* 167 (April 1968), pp.217-224.

same time displaying the modesty and piety, which were so valued by Evangelicals, and exemplifies that the core values of the Revival could be incorporated in the portraiture of its advocates. Half a century after Russell's death, John Ruskin (1819-1900) commented on this adaptability of Evangelicals to fashion. His musing on the contrasting attitude to depicting worship in Venetian art, where sitters are often portrayed praying, with that of the English, who are not painted in that manner, is interesting in this context.

“Now we may take it as certain that men like Wilberforce or Henry Thornton were as sincere in their religion and as entirely unashamed of it as any Venetian merchant prince; yet an attitude which revealed and reflected the deepest aspect of their lives was studiously avoided in such instances; simply because it was against the conventional habits of the day, and would have been regarded as a piece of ostentatious hypocrisy.”<sup>351</sup>

Charles Wesley, who had moved to London in 1771, was a “drawing-room Methodist”,<sup>352</sup> an Evangelical adapted to polite society. The musical brother of the famous John Wesley was a close friend of Russell's and the Wesley children spent at least two summers at the artist's Guildford home.<sup>353</sup> Besides painting Charles Wesley himself (fig.31), Russell repeatedly portrayed members of the Wesley family. This included Charles Wesley's sons, Charles junior, with a piano (fig.32), and Samuel Wesley (1766-1837), at the age of ten with an organ in the background and a copy of *Ruth An Oratorio by Samuel Wesley Aged Eight years* at his feet (fig.33).<sup>354</sup> Charles Wesley was the leading Methodist hymn composer of the eighteenth century, and, naturally, music was important in the Wesley family, even beyond its immediate use in worship. The Wesley's private subscription concerts,

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<sup>351</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. IX, Chap. III, §15, quoted in Elliott-Binns, 1953, pp.12-13.

<sup>352</sup> Forsaith, 1990, p.190.

<sup>353</sup> The artist first encountered Wesley when the latter was preaching. Russell records that he “much approve[d] of his Sermon a good man...”. RD, Vol.4, pp.156-157, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1771. Wesley and Russell visited each other. (Ibid., Vol.5, p.33, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1771; p.35, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1771; p.36, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1771; p.47, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1771; p.49, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1771; p.73, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1772; Vol.6, p.85, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1778) At some point during their stay, John Russell's youngest brother, and fellow musician of the younger Wesleys, William Russell, went with Samuel Wesley to see Martin Madan, who was not only one of the closest Evangelicals to John Russell but also Samuel Wesley's godfather. Kassler, 2001, pp.100, 101, 103, 112, 119 (FN46).

<sup>354</sup> “Samuel” was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1777; both paintings now at the RA of Music. RD, Vol.5, p.36, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1771; p.47, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1771. Walker, 1985, p.543.

which were held from 1779 to 1785, were among the most prestigious music events in London.<sup>355</sup> The private concert was the height of fashion during the 1770s and 1780s, as this kind of gathering provided a more comfortable and exclusive setting than did public concerts. Jonas Hanway argued in his *Thoughts on the Use and Advantages of Music* (1765) that private concerts were preferable to public ones because they offered calming and inspiring music without encouraging the listener to indulge in the vices of public London life, which he considered harmful to moderation and pious reflection.<sup>356</sup> By painting the Wesley family surrounded with allusions to music Russell may have intended to stress either their strong link to fashionable society,<sup>357</sup> or the role of music, with its particular relevance to this family, in Methodist worship. It is likely that contemporaries would have seen a combination of these two aspects in the portraits. As in the portraits of the Countess of Huntingdon, pious reflection and social representation were compatible.

Russell's portraits show Evangelicals as servants of God. They show Whitefield's squint, the Countess' allegorical rejection of worldly power, and Newton, who was uncomfortable with sitting for his portrait at all. These aspects, combined with a marked lack of conventional beauty in the sitters' faces, indicate the sitters' contempt for short-lived vanity. Instead, such portraits were used to pursue the sitters' campaigns. This is very clear in Whitefield's and the Countess' portraits, and less so in the case of Newton. The portraits of Charles Wesley's family illustrate that the leading Methodist composer could also partake in fashionable society. Russell's Methodist portraits show that Christian morals had their place and that they could be communicated in portraiture, while it was at the same time possible for those Evangelical crusaders to remain an integral part of the society they tried to change.

### **Fancy Portraits: Happy Families**

Russell's fancy pictures, for example his images of the deserving poor, convey the notion of an "innocent" state of childhood, while his portraits of Methodists are a blend of Christian values and fashionable representation. Russell's portraits of his

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<sup>355</sup> McVeigh, 1993, p.48.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>357</sup> Leppert: "Social order and domestic consumption of music. The policies of sound in the policing of gender construction in eighteenth-century England", in: Bermingham and Brewer, 1995, p.520.



own family and those of children from wealthy families contain aspects of both fancy pictures and portraits and could thus be described as fancy portraits. In “The young Artists” (1793) Russell depicted his two youngest sons, William (1782-1870) and Thomas (1785-1865), in Van Dyck costumes (fig.34).<sup>358</sup> Imitating the activity in which their father excelled, the boys are busy creating a pastel picture. By showing the boys with their heads together, as though concocting a plan, the painting is typical of the artist’s sympathetic and tender depiction of children. An episode from Russell’s diary indicates that he was extremely fond of his own family. When he was visiting his parents in Guildford in summer 1773, he received an alarming letter from his wife. Russell learned that his firstborn son, who was then three years old, his “little Jack”,

“was taken with the smallpox. [Because of] the Kings going to Portsmouth prevented my getting a carriage or horse I was obliged to walk till I came to Putney the heat of the day the fatigue of my walk and the mixture of some liquors in my stomach made me very sick when I came home. while I was attempting to reach I sunk down in a fit quite insensible. when I came to myself again I was sadly allarm’d by the cries of my wife who was much frightened at my fit but I hope the fright will have no bad consequences.”<sup>359</sup>

Russell’s exhausting foot march from Guildford to London shows that he genuinely cared for his family. That the artist was at ease with children in general and able to communicate with them is apparent from an episode of his stay at Burghley House in 1799, where he painted the three Cecil children (fig.35).<sup>360</sup> The children are shown seated around a table and, like the Russell boys, handling drawing tools. After describing his young sitters in his travel diary as affable, intelligent, and meek, Russell mentions their enthusiasm for the painting. “They all three comenced [sic] my assistants directly each would paint a little upon my picture not a little pleased with being permitted.”<sup>361</sup> Russell expressed his sympathy with his sitters using the

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<sup>358</sup> The Van Dyck costume features frequently in Russell’s child portraits, most prominently in the portrait of young Wilberforce (NPG).

<sup>359</sup> RD, Vol.6, pp.14-15, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1773.

<sup>360</sup> Elsley, 1915, p.5.

<sup>361</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.47-48.

features that characterise his fancy pictures. The children have exaggeratedly pretty, rounded features, hold their heads slightly inclined, and appear happy.

This ideal vision of childhood also features strongly in Russell's portraits of children with their parents. The portrait of Thomas Pitt and his son William (1799) (fig.36) shows the boy listening to his father's reading, while their close relationship finds expression in the bending of the two figures' heads towards the centre of the painting and towards each other.<sup>362</sup> Another, similar example is the portrait of Mrs. Grant and her daughter, with the standard presented to the Westminster Volunteer Cavalry (c.1800) (fig.38). The girl faces the viewer and smiles shyly, while holding a helmet above her head. Her mother has a close eye on her and has one arm around her child's waist.<sup>363</sup> Both paintings present happy families, whose bliss is built on affection. However, as present as the emotional bond between the generations in the paintings, is the children's acceptance of their parents' authority. Isaac Watts strongly advocated the necessity of filial obedience in his *Divine Songs*. He instructed his child reader to do what his parents told him and "with delight [to] obey".<sup>364</sup> Otherwise, Watts threatens,

"What heavy guilt upon him lies!  
How cursed is his name!  
The ravens shall pick out his eyes,  
And eagles eat the same."<sup>365</sup>

This obedience is illustrated in Russell's family images. His sitters seem to know their place in the system, and to follow the divine instructions. In return, Russell's painted families are full of harmony. What Desmond Shawe-Taylor called "almost maniacally happy families"<sup>366</sup> conformed to the ideal raised by sentimental literature and was thus exceedingly popular even with non-Evangelicals. Shawe-Taylor described the main features, as illustrated by Rowlandson's caricature "The Happy Family" (1786) (fig.37), as "attention-seeking infants" who are reacted to by their parents, "grinning grown-ups, doting wife, lots of sunshine, and a scattering of

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<sup>362</sup> Sotheby's, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1985.

<sup>363</sup> Sotheby's, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1987.

<sup>364</sup> Watts, 1971, Song 23, l.4.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., ll.5-12.

<sup>366</sup> Shawe-Taylor, 1990, p.184.

symbols like the lute for Harmony, the painting of a suckling Venus for Love, and the adoring dog for fidelity.”<sup>367</sup>

By means of exaggeration Rowlandson caricatured what was sincerely appreciated not solely in John Russell’s works. Two outstanding examples of this kind of family portraiture are Reynolds’ “Lady Cockburn and three Sons” (1773) (fig.39) and Lawrence’s “Mrs. Henry Baring with two of her Children” (1821) (fig.40).<sup>368</sup> Painted half a century apart, these images illustrate the continuity of sentimental portraiture of children and the family. Both paintings express the same emotional bond, with the children climbing around their mothers. Indeed, Russell’s paintings only represent the beginning of the celebration of that emotional bond between parents and offspring. This interest in the emotional child, which includes the openness towards compassion for poor children and was only just emerging during Russell’s lifetime, owed much to Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762). The publication of this work in England in 1763 marked a watershed in the treatment as well as in the portraiture of children. Rousseau’s ideas were at the heart of the change from the earlier formal child imagery, which depicted children as small adults, towards an iconography of children which depicted them as emotional creatures, who needed to be considered as children.<sup>369</sup> Russell’s work is part of this tradition. Among his most empathetic paintings is the unfinished portrait of a mother and her child from the early 1770s, which displays the features of emotional closeness and trust that would become characteristic of his family portraits in his later years (fig.41).<sup>370</sup> One such example is the portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Agar and family (1800) (fig.42), including mother, father, and gleeful children, whose harmonious ensemble expressed the fashionable family ideal.<sup>371</sup>

Some of Russell’s portraits of families were published as anonymous prints. “Mrs. Morgan and her Daughter”, engraved and published as “Maternal Love” (1790), is such an example (fig.43). Another case is “The Mother’s Holiday” (1796), which is a fancy, impersonalised picture, after the portrait of Mrs. Jeans and her two sons (fig.44). Williamson relates that Russell went to great lengths trying to capture

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., p.184.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., pp.182-187.

<sup>369</sup> Godfrey, 1956; Shawe-Taylor, 1990, pp.184-189.

<sup>370</sup> The sketch is at Guildford, where the picture is exhibited as “Mrs. Russell and Child” but no proof exists that the depicted were indeed Russell’s family.

<sup>371</sup> Phillips auction catalogue, *Water Colour, Drawings and Original Illustrations*, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2001.

the likeness of the mother in the Jeans portrait, which he considered his best work.<sup>372</sup> In the engraving this personal dimension disappears as the generalised title transforms the individual portrait into an impersonal, ideal image that others could identify with. Indeed, in order to widen the appeal of family group portraits, the Royal Academy encouraged the exhibition of particular portraits of women and children under generalised names, while the identities of the sitters were listed separately.<sup>373</sup> Engraving multiplied the message of feeling and tenderness even further and allowed the portrait of one family to be sold as a universal ideal to many families. Images such as “Maternal Love” and “The Mother’s Holiday” were therefore meaningful to the general public who were conversant in the language of emotion and morality.

### **“The Favourite Rabbit”: Animals and Sensibility**

Russell’s portraits of people with animals overlap with happy family imagery. The inclusion of animals, especially horses, dogs, and cats, was not unusual in eighteenth-century art and frequently occurs in the works of the leading portraitists. Of all the animals in Russell’s portraits, dogs feature most often. This fondness for dogs in portraiture is probably due to the fact that dogs were, at the same time, valued status symbols and close companions.<sup>374</sup> Both notions featured in Russell’s work. The exquisite portrait of Thomas Harmer Shepherd (1792) shows a dog placing its front paws onto the sitter’s lap and lifting its head towards the boy’s (fig.45). A similar composition appears in images such as that of the print “Age of Bliss” (fig.46), where a young child faces the viewer while embracing a spaniel that is stretching its head towards the face of its human companion.<sup>375</sup> Russell produced images of even greater closeness between animal and human sitters in his paintings of a young boy with a spaniel and that of a melancholic girl with a little dog (1785) (figs. 47, 48).<sup>376</sup> In the first image the similar sizes of the boy and the dog, as well as

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<sup>372</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.148.

<sup>373</sup> Pointon, 1993, pp.188, 258.

<sup>374</sup> Craske, 2000, pp.40-43.

<sup>375</sup> The painting was engraved by Strutt. It is very likely that Russell produced more paintings of this kind, which are now lost or un-attributed. Frankau’s biography of the engraver John Raphael Smith, for example, contains a reference to Russell’s portrait of Thomas Hibbert. This portrait, engraved by Smith in 1797, is described as depicting the sitter with a dog, “paw on his knee, looking to his face.” Frankau, 1902, pp.140-141.

<sup>376</sup> Whether this was a portrait or an anonymous fancy picture is not known today. It was for sale at Christie’s 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002, p.16, Lot 9. Tomkins also engraved the composition in 1792 with the

their intense eye contact, indicate their bonding. The second picture shows two creatures whose expressions demonstrate their shared emotions. The sense of emotional bonding through a trust-responsibility relationship, which is inherent in these examples by Russell, also exists in the works by other portraitists of the time, such as Gainsborough's "Henry, Third Duke of Buccleuch" (1770) (fig.49) and Wright of Derby's "Thomas and Mary Gisborne" (1786) (fig.50). Gainsborough's portrait of the Duke of Buccleuch epitomises the "man of feeling". He is depicted hiding the full glory of his worldly position by partly concealing his Order of the Thistle under a lapel.<sup>377</sup> Of much greater importance than worldly glory is the sitter's affectionate embrace of his dog. Russell was not therefore an exception when he alluded to the owners' responsibility and emotional attitude towards the creatures in their care.<sup>378</sup>

Russell was particularly inventive with the depiction of his sitters, whether in portraits or fancy pictures, using a variety of sometimes rather unusual animals. Besides the not unusual cats and lambs, he also included pigeons, ducks, chickens, owls, hawks, butterflies, ferrets, squirrels, rabbits, pigs, and goldfish.<sup>379</sup> Countryside themes, as depicted in "Rural Employment" (1787) (fig.51), were particularly apposite for the animal-human relationship. This painting, which was exhibited at the Academy and subsequently engraved, depicts two children lovingly caring for a hen and her chicks. That Russell took care in the depiction of animals is visible in the fact that separate studies of various animals are to be found among his sketches (fig.53).<sup>380</sup> Like the generalised prints of mother and child portraits, engravings of images including animals were tremendously popular. Animals signified the simplicity that was associated with the countryside. Opposing the supposed urban lack of restraint, sentimental literature promoted a retreat into the private world of the countryside as being conducive to benevolence, virtue, and chastity.<sup>381</sup> It was therefore only to be expected that Sir Robert Walpole advertised the fact that he had owned pigs and chickens before becoming a man of politics. The famous association of "farmer" King George III with the countryside also reflects the positive

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girl holding a recorder in her left hand as "Maria", see Williamson's *Scrapbook Collection of Photographs*, GHG.

<sup>377</sup> Shawe-Taylor, 1990, p.71.

<sup>378</sup> Harwood, 1928, p.248.

<sup>379</sup> See Williamson, 1894, for reproductions.

<sup>380</sup> RSB D, p.20.

<sup>381</sup> Brewer, 1997, p.113; Shaw-Taylor, 1990, p.64.

association with animals and their husbandry.<sup>382</sup> Russell's rustic girl with a piglet under her arm (fig.52) is part of that eighteenth-century trend which linked affection for animals to the appreciation of countryside virtues.<sup>383</sup>

The particular popularity of animals in fancy pictures and portraits during the last decades of the eighteenth century was due to a heightened philosophical interest in animals at that time. Philosophers were searching for the limits of the powers of human understanding, which led to the question how similar animals were to man. The key issues were whether animals had feelings, and whether their actions were solely guided by brute instinct or whether they possessed some form of intelligence. Ultimately it was asked whether animals had a soul. These questions were no original concern of the eighteenth century, but go back to the ancient Greeks. However, in the eighteenth century the advancement of natural philosophy, zootomy, anatomy, and medicine produced materials and methods that increased the chances of these questions being answered. That, in turn, made the topic more appealing and led most contemporary philosophers to comment on the subject. While this debate did not lead to any definite conclusions during Russell's lifetime, it became generally understood that animals could at least partly perceive the world as humans did. John Locke (1632-1704) considered animals incapable of abstract thought, but he granted them a certain degree of individuality. He thought it evident "that they do some of them in certain instances reason, as that they have sense."<sup>384</sup> Indeed, many contemporaries could not believe that a creature so intelligent looking and acting as a dog should be a "senseless" machine as Descartes had suggested.<sup>385</sup> Mandeville and David Hume (1711-76) had similar views. Mandeville's respect for animals went so far that he rejected meat as food.<sup>386</sup>

In his print series "Stages of Cruelty" (1751), Hogarth drew together collected images of cruelty towards animals. In his depiction of the maltreatment as mindless entertainment at the cost of helpless creatures he expressed a widespread rejection of such torture (fig.54).<sup>387</sup> In a memorable treatise of the late 1750s Samuel Johnson reinforced the attacks on animal cruelty, accusing some "inferior Professors

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<sup>382</sup> Shawe-Taylor, 1990, p.64.

<sup>383</sup> RA 1794, no.319.

<sup>384</sup> Locke, 1801, Vol.1, *Essay on Human Understanding*, pp.139-140.

<sup>385</sup> De Levie, 1947, p.32.

<sup>386</sup> Mandeville, 1970, pp.180-181. It was not long before demands for humanitarian treatment of animals arrived. See for example Hutcheson: *A System of Moral Philosophy*, 1755, I.313, quoted in Thomas, 1983, p.179.

<sup>387</sup> Craske, 2000, pp.50-51; Harwood, 1928, p.243.

of the medical knowledge” of a complete disregard of animals’ feelings through careless practices of vivisection. Johnson reported in disgust, that these professors would, for the sake of variety, “nail dogs to tables and open them alive” in order to find out “how long life may be continued in various degrees of mutilation”.<sup>388</sup> In an altogether cruel age of public amusement at executions, of inconceivable torture, and humiliation, voices were increasingly raised against the cruel abuse of animals. At the same time, however, cock fighting as well as bull and bear baiting remained popular and were regarded as displays of bravery until at least the 1770s.<sup>389</sup>

Among the Evangelicals, Methodists were associated particularly strongly with compassion for brute creation, as one of Horace Walpole’s (1717-97) anecdotes reflects. In a letter Walpole wrote,

“I met a rough officer at his house t’other day, who said he knew such a person was turning Methodist; for, in the middle of conversation, he rose, and opened the window to let out a moth.”<sup>390</sup>

Fighting “for the humane attitude towards the beast in England”,<sup>391</sup> the *Methodist Magazine* of November 1807 printed *A Sermon on the Sin of Cruelty to the Brute Creation*.<sup>392</sup> The sermon is based on Genesis I. 26, where it reads,

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl in the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth.”<sup>393</sup>

At first, the sermon points out that Adam, as the image of God, was as merciful towards the creation he was set over, as God himself.<sup>394</sup> However, this happy, paradisiacal period ended with the fall of man. Loving tenderness was replaced with “corruption and perverseness of heart” and a “prevalent cruelty of disposition which from the earliest childhood is exercised towards the patient and unoffending subjects

<sup>388</sup> Johnson: *Idler*, 1758, No. 17, quoted in DeLevie, 1947, p.15.

<sup>389</sup> Langford, 2000, p.69; De Levie, 1947, pp.16-17.

<sup>390</sup> Walpole, 1903-18, iv, p.399.

<sup>391</sup> De Levie, 1947, pp.48-52.

<sup>392</sup> The sermon had been preached in the Abbey Church at Bath, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1801, by the Rev. Richmond, and was published in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1807, pp.490-499.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid*, p.490.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid*, p.492.

of our tyrannical government.” The sermon continues with some more tangible points, by evoking images reminiscent of Hogarth’s “Stages of Cruelty”.

“Do you seek confirmation of this lamentable truth? – Go into the streets and lanes of the city, go into the highways and hedges, and there in the merciless conduct of your fellow-mortals toward the beasts on the field, the fowls of the air, and every creeping thing, read the true character of apostate man: there learn the necessity of that radical change of disposition which religion alone can accomplish.”<sup>395</sup>

Long before this Methodist sermon, John Flavel’s bestseller *Upon the love of a dog to his master* (1669), which was extensively reprinted well into Russell’s lifetime, advocated a deeper meaning in the relationship between animal and man. Flavel regarded a dog’s obedience and affection towards its human master as an example that man should endeavour to live up to in his following of Christ. He described how the faithful dog, despite “poor reward” will stand by his master without complaint.

“O my soul! what conviction and shame may this leave upon thee, who art oftentimes even weary of following thy master Christ, whose rewards and encouragements of obedience are so incomparably sweet and sure”.<sup>396</sup>

A dog could therefore be a constant reminder of one’s own responsibilities to Christ. When considering images such as Russell’s “Young Boy with Spaniel” (fig.47), where the sitter strokes the obedient dog with his right hand while holding a paw in his left, an allusion to mutual affection can hardly be denied.

Russell’s “Young Boy with Spaniel” carries the same educational message, on the subject of children’s relationships with animals, as contemporary tracts, hymns, and children’s books. Christopher Smart (1722-71), when talking about his cat, summarises this tradition by claiming that his pet was “an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon”.<sup>397</sup> Similarly, Locke upheld that “people should be accustomed, from their cradles, to be tender to the sensible creatures”.<sup>398</sup> William

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Flavel, 1788, pp.297-298.

<sup>397</sup> Smart, 1939, Song xix.

<sup>398</sup> Locke, 1801, Vol.ix, *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, p.113.



Cowper (1731-1800), who has been termed a “poet of sensibility” and whom Russell sketched, sentimentalised small animals, for example in his *Epitaph for a Hare* and *The Retired Cat*.<sup>399</sup> The poet’s famous lines on a worm sum up his attitude, which is coherent with that of most animal lovers in the late eighteenth century.

“I would not enter on my list of friends  
(Though graced with polish’d manners and fine sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility) the man  
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm, [...]”<sup>400</sup>

Russell’s portraits with animals are part of this tradition, which combines sensibility and Evangelical values. Among the most popular of Russell’s works was the pastel “Tom and his Pigeons” (1791) (fig.55). The sitter, the artist’s son Tom, is holding a basket with a couple of pigeons away from a cat that is eyeing the birds hungrily. The boy’s face is concentrating on the cat, in order to keep the danger under control. The painting was exhibited at the Academy alongside its pendant, “The Favourite Rabbit” (fig.56). In this image, a girl is looking straight at the viewer, while holding her arms out towards a rabbit that feeds from the hay in her hands. These pictures demonstrate a clear sense of the children’s responsibility for the helpless creatures. Russell depicted them actively pursuing the fulfilment of their duty by guarding the birds from the cat and by feeding the rabbit. The images can be seen as a means of instruction, similar to animal stories in children’s books. Mrs. Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories: Designed for the Instruction of Children, respecting their Treatment of Animals* (1786) employs an anthropomorphised family of robins, whose adventures aim to exemplify moral behaviour and to induce “universal Benevolence”.<sup>401</sup> Among the most influential eighteenth-century literature for children was Isaac Watts’ collection of *Divine Songs*. Watts, like other educational authors, stressed the necessity for children to behave in a virtuous manner towards animals. In the hymn *Innocent Play* he evokes the sight of peaceful lambs and doves, who “play all in love, without anger or rage”. Watts exclaims, “How much we may learn from the sight!” The hymn closes as follows,

<sup>399</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.52, mentions Russell’s Cowper portrait, which was a pastel measuring 20x16in.

<sup>400</sup> Cowper, *The Task*, 6 books, 1785, Book VI, ll.560-3, in: Cowper, 1931, p.417.

<sup>401</sup> Darton, 1958, p.158.

“Not a thing that we do, nor a word that we say,  
Should injure another in jesting or play; [...]  
For he’s still in earnest that’s hurt;  
How rude are the boys that throw pebbles and mire!  
There’s none but a madman will fling about fire,  
And tell you ‘ ‘Tis all but in sport.’ ”<sup>402</sup>

The inclusion of lambs in child portraiture makes the connection between Christian morals and sensibility particularly clear. As expressed in Watts’ song, lambs were above all associated with gentleness and regarded as morally instructive pets that taught a civil code of behaviour. Beyond that, they were the symbol of Christ, which made lamb imagery a common feature of Methodist hymns, most prominently in Charles Wesley’s famous *Gentle Jesus*.

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child;  
Pity my simplicity,  
Suffer me to come to Thee.

Lamb of God, I look to Thee,  
Thou shalt my example be:  
Thou art gentle, meek, and mild,  
Thou wast once a little child.

Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb!  
In Thy gracious hands I am;  
Make me, Savior, what Thou art:  
Live Thyself within my heart.”<sup>403</sup>

Russell painted a young boy (1776), Eliza de Courcy (1778), and the Earle Children (undated) with lambs (figs. 57, 58, 59). To the contemporary, the animal’s role in the cultivation of gentleness in the child, and the allusion to the “Lamb of God”,

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<sup>402</sup> Watts, 1771, *Moral Songs*, Song II, pp.56-57, pp.256-257.

<sup>403</sup> Verse 1, part I, p.441; Verse 2, Part II, p.442; Verse 6, Part II, p.443, in: Wesley, 1870, Vol.vi, pp.441-442.

would have been obvious. The depiction of the lamb in each of the portraits is based on the same, conventional Christian iconography, which goes back to the Middle Ages.<sup>404</sup> In line with this tradition, Russell's lambs are depicted standing, with one front leg lifted, and turning towards the sitter, who embraces them. The lamb is further associated with John the Baptist, who is quoted in the Bible as having exclaimed on the approach of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>405</sup> The metaphor of Christ as lamb in connection with John the Baptist was also prominent in eighteenth-century art. This can be seen in the popular engravings after the Spanish seventeenth-century painter Murillo, for example "St. John and the Lamb" (1665) (fig.60), which uses medieval lamb iconography but combines it with a new kind of sentimental child imagery.<sup>406</sup> Russell's images of lambs follow a trend that had started with Reynolds' and Gainsborough's development of Murillo's theme (fig.61).

If the development of religious art in Britain is considered in the context of that country's exceptional religious history, then the almost complete absence of Biblical scenes in Russell's oeuvre does not mean that he was not a religious painter. Devotion in late eighteenth-century British art was expressed not so much in religious history painting, which was much more common on the continent, but in fancy pictures and portraits. These Evangelical genres par excellence gave John Russell, amongst others, the opportunity to produce religious art that preached morality and virtue in the pictorial equivalent of the accessible language of popular sentimental literature. Fancy pictures and portraits were compatible with fashion and contemporary conventions, because the domestic sizes and homely themes of the paintings and engravings were tailored for an increasingly influential middle class.

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<sup>404</sup> Schiller, 1972, figs. 405-408; Didron, 1886, pp.325, 334.

<sup>405</sup> St. John Gospel 1:29.

<sup>406</sup> Postle, 1995, p.79.

# 4

“To look through nature up to nature’s God”

“That there is a God, all nature cries aloud  
through all her works.”

(The Rev. John Ryland, *Contemplations*,  
Vol.1, 1780, p.6)

## The Religious Natural Philosopher

Through his engagement with Sensibility John Russell had found a way in which he could act, at the same time, as a religious and fashionable artist. Russell also expressed religious thoughts through his keen interests in natural philosophy and in the observation of nature. Throughout the artist's life, there is evidence that he saw traces of God's Creation in nature.<sup>407</sup> When travelling in the Malvern Hills in the summer of 1780, Russell produced watercolours of the grass-covered hilltops of that region.<sup>408</sup> In one of the drawings, two solitary wanderers sit contemplating in this bare landscape (fig.62). The artist observed these hills with interest, going to some effort to render the effect of sunshine and passing clouds. Maybe inspired by the sublime solemnity of the scene, his thoughts turned towards God. In his travel diary Russell described the scene as a "place where the wonders of God are to be seen in the great work of nature."<sup>409</sup> God's wisdom, so Russell believed, was present, and openly visible, in the beauty of the rolling hills.

That God was visible in His Creation is a conviction elaborated upon in those parts of the *Evangelical Magazine*, which are likely to have been composed by Russell. Just as Russell had reflected on the Malvern Hills, the essays *On Christian Philosophy* contemplate nature as an awe-inspiring display of the Maker's greatness.

"Who can think of the vast bulk of the Sun, without calling to mind its glorious Creator? [...] If the material Sun be so great, how inconceivably greater must He be who spake, and it was made, who commanded, and it stood fast!"<sup>410</sup>

When the stars are discussed, a link is established between humankind, nature, and Jesus Christ. It is mentioned that the "brightest and most illustrious" of all the newly discovered stars was to lead the three wise men to Bethlehem, where "they saw with rapture, the Creator of the stars, lying in a manger".<sup>411</sup> The reader is reminded that nature, in the form of a guiding star, enabled humankind to find Christ, not only the

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<sup>407</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.49-59.

<sup>408</sup> The image shown here is an undated sketch, no. E.45. Three further sketches of the Malvern Hills, which date 1780, are in RSB E, pp.102, 104, 106-107.

<sup>409</sup> RD, Vol.8, p.19, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1780. The drawing and diary entry are not necessarily from the same excursion, but belong undoubtedly to the same summer and region.

<sup>410</sup> EM, Vol.1, p.116, 1793.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., Vol.2, p.245, 1794.

son of God, but also the Creator of the entire world, of humans, and of all the stars. Conspector upheld that everything was part of one whole, united through God. If the believer realised this, then he could find the means to better comprehend the greatness of God through the observation of nature. Thus natural philosophy became linked to devotional wonder and amazement. This is true not only for John Russell, but for many of the artist's contemporaries. Watts' verse is typical as an expression of Evangelicals' religious fascination with nature.

“The spacious earth and spreading flood  
Proclaim the wise and pow’rful God!  
And thy rich glories from afar,  
Sparkle in ev’ry rolling star!”<sup>412</sup>

Apart from such considerations inspired by the beauty of a landscape or by the contemplation of the universe, the artist further saw divine wisdom in small and complex structures such as those which could be found in the human body itself. Among Russell's anatomical studies, next to a drawing of a skull, the artist noted that “the God of Nature” created the muscles around the skull in such a way that they could be most effective.<sup>413</sup> Russell explained that, “for the extension of the Head small muscles were thought most requisite least they might [...] grow weary in their long dependence they are under”. As well as contemplating the body's designer whilst working on anatomical drawings, Russell also noted that he found himself “indulged with the works of the God of nature”<sup>414</sup> when looking at a landscape, and “that God was pleas'd to preach”<sup>415</sup> to him from the stars when he looked at the night sky. Russell would reflect on God's presence in very different circumstances, and any subject could spark off this contemplation. This degree of universal devotion made a profound impression on his artwork. The following two chapters investigate Russell's adoration of the God *of nature in nature*.

In 1776 Russell painted Mrs. John Oliver, née Jane Dean, in Kensington Gardens (fig.63). The young lady is depicted studying some of the most popular Evangelical reading material of the eighteenth century, James Hervey's *Meditations*

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., Vol.13, p.19, 1805.

<sup>413</sup> RSB Vol.1, no. 6. The inscription is in pencil and opposite the skull drawing.

<sup>414</sup> Quoted previously on p.57 (FN251).

<sup>415</sup> Quoted previously *ibid.*, (FN250).

*and Contemplations* (1746).<sup>416</sup> In this work, Hervey praises the magnificence of the divine Creator whose working he sees reflected in His Creation.

“Can there be a more powerful incentive to devout *gratitude*, than to consider the magnificent and delicate scenes of the universe, with the particular reference to CHRIST as the Creator? – Every object, viewed in this light, will surely administer incessant recruits to the languishing lamp of divine love.”<sup>417</sup>

The author states that this overpowering of the mind by the inconceivable greatness of the universe necessarily inspires benevolence. Echoing Edwards and anticipating Russell, Hervey writes about the relationship between the contemplation of nature and the betterment of Christians. A believer could not but become generous and compassionate once he realised that God had made the whole magnificent universe for him in an act of “unbounded love”.<sup>418</sup> Hervey writes about natural philosophy and the study of nature,

“Having just *tasted* (what they call) the politer studies, I would now devote my whole *application* to the lively oracles. From other pursuits I might glean, perhaps, a few fragments of low, of lean, of unsatisfactory instruction. From this [i.e. the contemplation of nature] I trust to reap a harvest of the sublimest truths, the noblest improvements, and the purest joys. [...] Let my thoughts perpetually rove through the awfully-pleasing walks of inspiration. Here grow those heaven-born plants, the trees of *life* and *knowledge*, whose ambrosial fruits we now may ‘take, and eat, and live for ever.’”<sup>419</sup>

In accordance with the mainstream of both older and contemporary philosophy, Russell shared Harvey’s excitement about the one great whole to which they assumed that all of God’s Creation belonged. To men with such a philosophy, the study and depiction of any part of that Creation could only appear as a form of

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<sup>416</sup> The Rev. Newton was a Calvinist Anglican an important personality of the Evangelical Revival. As parish priest at Weston Favell he later spread his influence in the area around Northampton.

<sup>417</sup> Hervey, 1769, Vol.1, p.181. Hervey explains (ibid., p.107) that he deliberately mentions the Son rather than the Father as the Creator, because he wants to celebrate the divinity of Christ and bring the reader close to the New Testament.

<sup>418</sup> Everett, 1994, quotes from Hervey’s 1816 edition, p.320.

<sup>419</sup> Hervey, 1769, Vol. 1, p.112.

worship of the divine Maker. It did not matter whether this worship focussed on botany, anatomy, medicine, astronomy, the chemistry of pastels, or the physics of hot air balloons, because in the end the worship was always directed to the same God as the Creator of all things. Russell saw Hervey's "heaven-born plants" and "trees of *life* and *knowledge*" everywhere and could reflect on the religious aspects of the world in every single one of his paintings. Russell's religion relied heavily on the observation of the material world and this correlation between nature and God is the dominating theme throughout his life and work. While it is one of the main goals of this thesis to re-discover this philosophy and its expression in art, it would have been recognised by Russell's contemporaries, because many of them would have shared it.

Akenside's claim in the mid eighteenth century that "Truth and God are one"<sup>420</sup> explains why many clergymen or interested layman at the time dedicated their leisure time to natural philosophy and to the search for truth. While travelling in Yorkshire in 1799, Russell made the following note in his travel diary on a discussion about colour theory. The artist wrote, "In the carriage Mr. Hey communicated to me the remarks which Dr. Milner the Dean of Carlisle had made to him upon colours which were curious & Well worth attention."<sup>421</sup> Russell then drew a diagram to "help the memory to retain some of the observations at least".<sup>422</sup> This diary entry records a type of conversation that frequently occurred between educated men on their coach trips. The travel companions Russell mentioned here were leading Revival figures, including the Rev. Isaac Milner, Dean of Carlisle (1750-1820), who was also Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in Cambridge and a close friend of Hey's.<sup>423</sup> Milner influenced the young Wilberforce and installed John Newton as his successor in that position. Mr. Hey was one of the leading lay Methodists of Leeds and that city's most eminent surgeon.<sup>424</sup> The Methodist medic acted as an intermediary between Russell and the regional clergymen who were very interested in natural philosophy. Among the artist's diary entries are numerous mentions of religious meetings which either took place at the surgeon's home or had been arranged by him. Russell repeatedly mentions the Rev. Mr. Sheepshanks, minister of St. Johns, as "a very considerable astronomical Gentleman with whom I

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<sup>420</sup> Akenside, 1744, p.16, l.372.

<sup>421</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.7-8.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>423</sup> Pearson, 1822, p.76.

<sup>424</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.9-41.



spent an evening at Mr. Heys".<sup>425</sup> Although such astronomical discussions are often not recorded,<sup>426</sup> Russell portrayed the son of Mr. Sawyer, the Sunday school master, with a telescope. This implies that the topic was of wider interest. There are indications of an active interest in natural philosophy throughout the Evangelical community. John Venn's notebooks are full of comments on optics, mechanics, and astronomy. The latter interest is underlined by the presence of a Dollond Telescope in the Venn household.<sup>427</sup> Russell's frequent contact with likeminded clergy and laypersons constantly stimulated his own religiously motivated interest in nature, and made him, like them, not only a natural philosopher, but a natural theologian.

One of the leading missionaries of natural theology was the Baptist minister John Ryland, who summarised his philosophy in the title of his most noteworthy publication, *A Contemplation on the Existence and Perfections of God, drawn from the several Parts of the Visible World, the Structure of the human body, and the wonderful powers of the Soul; as an Image of the Wisdom, Power, and the Inevitable and Immortal Nature of God*. Russell's portrait of Ryland, which depicts him conventionally as a priest with band and wig, features as the frontispiece of the publication.<sup>428</sup> Ryland set out in his *Contemplations* to "prove the immortality of the soul [...] on the principles of reason alone".<sup>429</sup> His work built on the notion that was widely spread among Evangelicals, that the "most simple, striking, and popular arguments, are those which are drawn from the visible world [...] and will be found the best sources of evidence as long as the world endures".<sup>430</sup> Ryland elaborates,

"The wisdom of Christ is visible to common sense in all the parts of creation from the blazing sun to a grain of sand [...] and in the wise adjustment of every part of the creation to the whole, so as to constitute one harmonious system, adorned with beauty to excite our love; replete

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<sup>425</sup> Russell, 1799, p.19.

<sup>426</sup> In his diary, Russell focuses on recording spiritual matters and mentions other events only sporadically. For that reason, records on conversations on natural philosophy are often reduced to the bare statement that they had taken place, but they are rarely recorded in detail.

<sup>427</sup> Hennell, 1958, p.42.

<sup>428</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.53, writes, "Russell painted a very successful portrait of Ryland, which was engraved for his work *Contemplations of the Beauties of Creation*, and was published in mezzotint by Carington Bowles." One copy is at the NPG.

<sup>429</sup> Ryland, Vol.1, 1780, preface, no page numbers.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., p.vi.

with novelty to excite curiosity; and full of grandeur to rouse admiration into the most pleasing astonishment and ardent devotion.”<sup>431</sup>

The contemplation of Christ is presented as inspired by the three keys of love, curiosity, and admiration. Ryland too advocated the observation of nature.

Botany proved a particularly popular branch of observation with Evangelicals. Ryland, in his *Contemplations*, continues to place the different subject areas of natural philosophy within the scope of God’s greatness. On plants he tells us,

“Persons who have never given their attention to these things cannot imagine what pleasures, even to astonishment, are to be found in the contemplation and study of them. The riches of wisdom, laid out on even the meanest vegetable, is beyond all description.”<sup>432</sup>

The compatibility of religious reflection with the study of plants materialises in Russell’s 1803 portrait of the Rev. Milne (1743-1815). Russell depicted Milne at third-length, with his head turned towards the left, and eyes gazing out of the picture (fig.64). The shining white of the bands, which stands out from the black of the sitter’s gown, and the generally subdued tones of the image, dominate the uncluttered composition and emphasise the sitter as a clergyman. However, that Milne’s interests stretched further than the Bible is clearly indicated by the fact that Russell depicted him holding a volume with is inscribed “Linnaei genera Plantarum”. The Swede Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) had written *Genera Plantarum* in 1737, and Milne had translated it in 1771. Through this combination of his clerical robes and the botanical reference, the sitter appears as both clergyman and natural philosopher at the same time. It is clear that this combination was nothing new. There are similar images of natural theologians, such as the portrait of John Flamsteed (1646-1719) by an anonymous painter from around 1680,<sup>433</sup> and those of James Bradley (1693-1762) and Stephen Hales (1677-1761), both painted in the mid eighteenth century by Thomas Hudson. All three of these are depicted with their white bands shining on

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid, Vol.3, n.d., p.305.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, 1780, p.314.

<sup>433</sup> Porter, introduction in Forrester, 1987, pp.18-19. The portrait is by an unknown artist and dates from circa 1680.

black gowns.<sup>434</sup> Milne's writings echo Ryland's attitude to the value of the study of nature.

"I said that natural history is an [sic] useful study. Can we for a moment doubt it, when we recollect that it furnishes one of the strongest arguments for the existence of a supreme intelligent Being? [...] The works of God are the most easy and intelligible demonstrations of his being and attributes; and he who carefully studies those works may be truly said, in the beautiful language of the poet, 'To look through nature up to nature's God.'"<sup>435</sup>

Milne made a case for the existence of a link between knowledge and Christian moral qualities in a compilation of sermons. The principles of charity, he wrote, were "originally stamped upon the human soul by the Father of Spirits himself". Therefore charity was part of the human, part of Creation, and is thus dictated "by Natural Religion" as well as by Revelation.<sup>436</sup> Milne wanted to spread his knowledge of botany and, in the *Advertisement* of his Linnaeus translation, expressed his wish to serve the public, those "enemies to the monopolizers [sic] of knowledge".<sup>437</sup> Despite the purported utility of observation, Milne did not devote as much time to the observation of nature as he would have liked. Robert Thornton (c.1768-1837), who very likely commissioned the Milne portrait from Russell,<sup>438</sup> wrote about Milne, "It is hoped that the example of his labours, if not of his successes, will induce other clergymen to take up a science, more connected with their mode of life than, seemingly, with that of any other class of people."<sup>439</sup> Other clergy were indeed involved in the advancement of botany. Russell's portrait of the Rev. Martyn, Regius Professor of Botany at Cambridge, was at the Academy in 1793 and also appeared in Thornton's exhibition. Thornton said of Martyn, that to "no person is Botanical science more indebted than to him".<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid., pp.25-27.

<sup>435</sup> Milne, 1771, p.11.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 1780, Sermon iv, pp.97-98.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 1771, p.4.

<sup>438</sup> Russell painted Thornton in 1799 on his sitter's commission in a blue coat, half-length, holding a mortar board, with Guy's hospital in the background. Exhibited at R.A. 1799, no. 406, and engraved, for example by Bartolozzi for *A New Illustration of the Sexual System of Linnaeus* (1799), and by Ridley for the *European Magazine* (1803). See Sotheby's, *Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Drawing and Water Colour*, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1997, Lot 54.

<sup>439</sup> Thornton, 1804, p.47.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., p.44.

The painting was engraved for Thornton, who used it for his infamous *Illustration of the Sexual System of Linnaeus* in 1799.<sup>441</sup> This ambitious work, consisting of exquisite colour plates and plant descriptions, represents an attempt to combine the striking parade of exotic material with a philosophical, and at times religious, contemplation of nature (fig.65). In his description of the common blue Passion Flower (*passiflora cerulea*), Thornton wrote that the leafs of the plant resemble the spear in the side of Christ, the tendrils represent the cords on his hands, and the ten petals symbolise the Apostles, after Judas' betrayal and Peter's desertion. The pillar in the centre is regarded as the cross, with the inner circle around the cross representing the crown of thorns. White stands for innocence, blue for heaven, and the red specks on the petals of the variation *passiflora alata* are linked to drops of blood.<sup>442</sup> This religiously themed description is accompanied by poetry, which refers to that "sainted flower", and which leads the beholder's imagination to conjure up "the sad scene of darken'd Calvary!"<sup>443</sup> In another composition the flower is given the ability of religious reflection.

"By Faith sublim'd, fair PASSIFLORA steers  
Her pilgrimage along this Vale of Tears,  
The hopes of Heaven *alone* her thoughts employ,  
CHRIST is her glory, and the *Cross her joy*. --"<sup>444</sup>

Russell was involved in the creation of the frontispiece of Thornton's *Temple of Flora*. The allegorical scene is entitled "Flora, Aesculapius, Ceres, and Cupid, honouring the bust of Linnaeus" and is a co-production of John Opie (1761-1807) and Russell (fig.66).<sup>445</sup> Thornton explains that Flora, Cupid, and Aesculapius are

"emblematic of the advantages derived from the study of the science of Botany, as in the works of Linnaeus, to *physic, agriculture*, and as an

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<sup>441</sup> The *Temple of Flora* was part of *A New Illustration of the Sexual System of Linnaeus*. The images in this publication were hand finished and sometimes the order varied.

<sup>442</sup> This religious association with the passion flower might have been implied in Russell's portrait of Hannah Neale (1784-1822), which he painted between 1785 and 1790. The pastel shows the girl in a white dress, with a blue band round her waist, and a passionflower in her hand. (Phillips, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1995, Lot.682).

<sup>443</sup> Shaw's poem on *passiflora alata*, in Thornton, 1812, no page numbers.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., poem by Frances Arabella Rowden.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 1804, p.5, "The fair forms of FLORA and of CUPID, with the bust of LINNAEUS, cannot fail to disclose to the eye of the observer the magic pencil of a RUSSEL"

*elegant pursuit* for Ladies. CUPID is represented in allusion to the *sexual system*, invented by Linnaeus. The Zephyr above denotes *Spring*, the seasons most favourable to the study of Botany.”<sup>446</sup>

Charlotte Lennox (1720-1804) composed the lines which Russell’s Cupid is depicted writing onto the pedestal.

“All *animated* Nature owns may sway,  
Earth, sea, and air, my potent laws obey,  
And thou, divine LINNAEUS, trac’d my reign  
O’er trees, and shrubs, and FLORA’s beauteous train,  
Prov’d them obedient to my soft control,  
And gaily breathe an aromatic soul”<sup>447</sup>

Carl Linnaeus would have had no difficulty in acknowledging that Cupid’s “potent laws” were indeed God’s laws. Linnaeus’ Natural Theology was in line with the trends of his time, which becomes clear when we consider his comment that he tracked God’s “footsteps over nature’s fields and found in each one, even in those I could scarcely make out, an endless wisdom and power, an unsearchable perfection.”<sup>448</sup> He also maintained that “Nature and Revelation can never come into conflict” and that there was a “unity”, “an ultimate synthesis” in all things existent in the world.<sup>449</sup> Linnaeus sees natural, as well as moral and political, order as united, considering crime and punishment as two aspects of the same unity.<sup>450</sup> This exudes the same spirit as Conspector’s metaphor of the three wise men following the star of Bethlehem, only to find “the Creator of the stars, lying in a manger”,<sup>451</sup> and the claim of Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), in her *Devotional Pieces* (1775), that there is

“an analogy between things material and immaterial. As from some late experiments in philosophy it has been found, that the process of

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 1812, no page numbers.

<sup>448</sup> Quoted from the Introduction of the later editions of Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae* (1735) by S. Lindroth: ‘The Two Faces of Linnaeus’, in: Fraengsmyr (ed.), 1994, pp.1-62, quote p.12.

<sup>449</sup> Wilkman, 1970, p.98.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., pp.74, 120.

<sup>451</sup> *EM*, p.245, 1794, June. For full quote see p.97.

vegetation restores and purifies vitiated air; so does that moral and political ferment which accompanies the growth of new sects, communicate a kind of spirit and elasticity necessary to the vigour and health of the soul, but soon lost amidst the corrupted breath of an indiscriminate multitude.”<sup>452</sup>

Many Evangelicals, including Russell, accepted divine omnipresence in nature and actively searched for it. Natural Theology, the empirical study of God’s manifestation, offered great pleasures to the Christian observer, because, as Linnaeus put it, “That God exists prove all our senses, whatever they are directed at”.<sup>453</sup>

### **Empirical Assurance**

Despite the positive effects that Evangelicals saw in the observation of God’s Creation, it was not the most important way of worshipping. The main, unrivalled source of information on God for the believer was not nature, but scriptural Revelation. The investigation of the works of God was regarded as no more than a useful supplement to the study of the Bible. Referring to Newton’s *Omicron Letter No.15*, Russell wrote in the essay *On Christian Philosophy* in the *Evangelical Magazine*,

“the Most High God, in condescension to the weakness of our faculties, the brevity of our lives, and our many avocations, has comprised all the knowledge conducive to our real happiness, in four comprehensive volumes: The Bible – the book of Creation – the book of Providence – and the book of the heart.”<sup>454</sup>

He continues with the remark that Christians naturally do not have a great deal of time for “philosophical researches”, because “the leisure they enjoy is more properly devoted to the book of grace than to the book of nature”. The whole point of his own account on God in nature, Russell explained, was that it would provide a sketch of

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<sup>452</sup> Barbauld, 1775, pp.44-45.

<sup>453</sup> from Linnaeus’ *Dieta Naturalis* (unfinished, begun 1733), quoted in: Wilkman, 1970, p.100.

<sup>454</sup> *EM*, Vol.1, p.23, 1793.

the contemplation of nature, so as to lift the believers' thoughts without taking too much of their time, which he advises would better be spent on Bible study.<sup>455</sup> It was this paramount need to spread Revelation that prevented the Rev. Milne from devoting himself more to his botanical studies. Ryland too, in his *Contemplations*, considered Bible study a pillar of religion. Addressing an audience of "serious young Christians in general"<sup>456</sup> he claimed the study of divine Revelation as a prerequisite, if "clear knowledge of God and our duty, and a state of future happiness or eternal life"<sup>457</sup> were to be gained.

The argument that Revelation is more important than observation appears in Russell's private diaries as well as in 'Conspector's' publications. Russell indicated in his comments on sermons, in his diary, that the Bible was always the first and more reliable authority, while observations of God in nature could only illustrate Biblical Revelation, albeit with great power. This attitude informed Russell's thoughts about Jonathan Edwards' writings. The artist wrote that he was "greatly pleased" with Edwards' *Affection*, but he criticises Edwards too, for "he says too decidedly that prayer is to affect our minds rather than God. I think this should be said with modesty & fear and the scripture account to be more attended than reason."<sup>458</sup> This also becomes clear from Russell's everyday devotion to scripture. In an example from 1773, the painter noted that Rev. Charles Edward de Coetlogon preached on "the office of the spirit in convincing of Sin Righteousness & Judgment". Russell comments that he is "apt to think Mr. D. has endeavour'd to bring that down to reason which human reason cannot comprehend".<sup>459</sup>

Whenever a minister or layperson had the time to embark upon the laudable investigation of nature, he had to follow the Bible. Russell, alias Conspector, proposed the Bible's paramount authority of knowledge when claiming, "it has been proved by persons well acquainted with the Hebrew Bible, that the Scriptures speak exactly and philosophically true in natural things."<sup>460</sup> He claimed that the Bible was always right. While there was constant tension between Evangelicals of different convictions, it was their rejection of decadence based on a common point of Bible interpretation, which united them. Their renewal of the Church, they believed, could

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ryland, Vol.1, 1780, preface, no page numbers.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> RD, Vol.D, p.26, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1801.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., Vol.6, p.10, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1773. For de Coetlogon see also p.29 (FN81).

<sup>460</sup> EM, Vol.1, p.24, 1793.

best be realised by transferring importance from ceremony and tradition, in which they saw the roots of decadence, to the incorruptible Bible.<sup>461</sup> The Bible therefore, so crucial to the Evangelical Revival, is both the unquestionable tool of spiritual Revelation and the basis of a widespread Natural Theology, as it not only justifies, but also encourages the investigation of God's work.<sup>462</sup>

Besides this common foundation in the Bible, Evangelicals' interest in the investigation of nature was further encouraged by the doctrine of assurance. Assurance theories grew out of the confident knowledge that God had accepted one's soul. Rooted in seventeenth-century Puritan tradition, this topic was not an original idea of the eighteenth century.<sup>463</sup> However, the nature of the Revivalist understanding of assurance differed in one crucial point from the Puritan original. The latter regarded assurance as a rare gift, which individuals sometimes received towards the ends of their lives. Eighteenth-century Evangelicals, in contrast, maintained that assurance was an experience available to anybody and that it could come surprisingly and at any time. Calvinist Methodists, such as Russell, believed that assurance, while in principle available to anybody, could also be taken away again. This led, as in the case of the painter, to obsessive self-examination and a constant fear of losing what God had granted. The artist reflected on his doubts in his diary, where he wrote during a spell of uncertainty, "I long for Death in confidence of Glory."<sup>464</sup>

In the spirit of the natural theologians, the search for assurance adopted an empirical approach. Jonathan Edwards, in *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), provided the checklist against which the assurance-seeking Christian could test whether God had accepted him. Edwards made the colossal claim that he could know when assurance had arrived, because he was, as Bebbington put it, "far more confident than his Puritan forefathers of the powers of human knowledge."<sup>465</sup> This idea spread throughout the Revival and is apparent in Wesley's *Sermon on Faith*, where he declared, "to man in his natural condition sense is the only inlet of knowledge".<sup>466</sup> Wesley was an empiricist, and was therefore in the English tradition, which went back to the seventeenth century, when

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<sup>461</sup> Ditchfield, 1998, pp.40-45; Bebbington, 1989, p.3.

<sup>462</sup> Romans 1:18-21. See Chapter 2, p.54.

<sup>463</sup> Bebbington, 1989, pp.42-43.

<sup>464</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.1, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1771.

<sup>465</sup> Bebbington, 1998, p.47.

<sup>466</sup> Elliott-Binns, 1953, p.56, quotes from Wesley's *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p.106.



the concept of the empirical experiment had emerged in natural philosophy. John Locke in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) argued, “knowledge comes from experience”.<sup>467</sup> So too argued William Paley (1743-1805), who, based on Butler’s empiricism in *Analogy of Religion*, built his Natural Theology on the fundament of reason.<sup>468</sup> This imbuing of Evangelicalism with empiricism led to a greater emphasis on reasoning in religious thinking. Accordingly, Wesley talked of faith as “a supernatural inward sense or sight”<sup>469</sup> and Edwards maintained that a believer could perceive his faith through a new sense, as real as the senses of the body. “Unbelievers might languish in ignorance of God, but at conversion the Holy Spirit originates ‘a new inward perception or sensation of their minds’.”<sup>470</sup> Whether or not they could feel sure that God had accepted them, Evangelicals employed the empirical method to search for God’s action on their own souls.<sup>471</sup> Leonard Elliott-Binns recognised in this combination of empirical natural philosophy and religious experience “a striking proof of how entirely the mechanical philosophy had saturated the age”.<sup>472</sup> Rationalism, he argues, was used by philosophers as well as by churchmen, and he quotes Wesley stating that “I am ready to give up any opinion which I cannot by calm, clear reason defend [...] I would just as soon put out my eyes to secure my faith, as lay aside reason.”<sup>473</sup> This widespread utilisation of reason and empiricism to investigate assurance makes the Evangelical Revival a movement of experimental religion<sup>474</sup> not tending solely towards introspection, but also towards the investigation of the natural world. The fact that the above quotation from Newton’s *Opticks*<sup>475</sup> could be said to sum up Russell’s religious philosophy shows the close affinity between natural philosophy and religion.

The rising religious confidence in natural philosophy did however meet with the opposition of those who felt that natural theology, far from celebrating God’s greatness, violated His secrets of nature. These people saw no connection between natural philosophy and religion, or even regarded the placing of natural philosophy in the service of religion as heresy. In the early seventeenth century Francis Bacon

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<sup>467</sup> Bebbington, 1989, p.48, quotes from R.I. Aaron, *John Locke*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Oxford, 1971).

<sup>468</sup> Le Mahieu, 1976, pp.57, 63, 77.

<sup>469</sup> Simon, 1923, p.207, quotes from the 1744 Methodist conference minutes.

<sup>470</sup> Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 1746, in: Edwards, Vol.2, 1959, p.205.

<sup>471</sup> Bebbington, 1989, pp.48-50.

<sup>472</sup> Elliott-Binns, 1953, p.56.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid., pp.59-60, he quotes from Wesley: *Works*, Vol.ix, p.105, and Vol.x, p.267.

<sup>474</sup> Bebbington, 1989, pp.57-58.

<sup>475</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.54-55.

(1561-1626) had declared natural philosophy and faith independent of each other.<sup>476</sup> While Bacon's view was exceptional and did not represent the contemporary mainstream, his idea survived to resurface during Russell's life time, most impressively in the form of William Blake's (1757-1817) hostile attitude towards nature and its investigation.<sup>477</sup> His denunciative stance on a merger of reason and faith owes much to Voltaire (1694-1778) and the Deist view that Natural Theology acted as a substitute for Revelation and that the two could not be reconciled.<sup>478</sup> While Russell followed Newton's and Paley's position, who believed in the realisation of God in nature, Blake mistrusted material nature and demonised Newton. In his famous image of the great natural philosopher with a compass (fig.67) Blake mocked the physicist as the self-proclaimed creator, as the epitome of the misguided natural philosopher, who deemed himself able to trace the presence of God in nature.<sup>479</sup> In his tract *There is no Natural Religion* Blake warned of the narrowness of reason by maintaining that a person "who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only."<sup>480</sup> He stated his point even more forcefully when he proclaimed, "whoever believes in Nature [...] disbelieves in God – for Nature is the work of the Devil."<sup>481</sup> Accordingly, Blake's art is non-empirical, while to Russell, who understood the material world as a mirror held up to God's will, the study of nature was of paramount importance. In the 1860s Baden Powell, in his *Essay and Reviews*, finally and lastingly separated the physical aspects of nature, which he declared the subject of science, from the moral aspects, which he attributed to theology. This separation has become so strong that Russell's natural theology has not previously been recognised, and the same may still be true for other artists.

In his quest to learn more of divine wisdom as displayed in nature, Russell utilised his acquaintance with some of the most observant and empirical people of the century. One of the earliest of Russell's important paintings, and his first notable portrait of a natural philosopher, is that of Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), President

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<sup>476</sup> Webb, 1996, p.18.

<sup>477</sup> Nicolson, 1946, pp.165-174, has a useful description of Blake's attitude to Newton.

<sup>478</sup> Brooke, 1974, pp.34, 52; Bebbington, 1989, p.50.

<sup>479</sup> Nicolson, 1946, pp.165-174.

<sup>480</sup> Bindman, 1982, p.95.

<sup>481</sup> Raine, 1982, p.12. The diarist Crabb Robinson recorded Blake's words in *Reminiscences of Henry Crabb Robinson*, in: E.J. Morley (ed.): *Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, etc. Being Selections from the Remains of Henry Crabb Robinson*. Manchester, London, NY, 1922.

of the Royal Society, an eminent botanist and patron of knowledge (fig.93).<sup>482</sup> Russell painted Banks in third length, his body and head slightly turned. Engaged in conversation, the sitter is holding a piece of paper containing one of Russell's own moon studies in front of him and visible to the viewer. Banks wrote about portrait engravings of himself, "a Picture of Sir Joshua" and "another from the Pencil of the President [i.e. Benjamin West]", and a third, "most decided Likeness, from a Crayon Picture of Russell". He favours the latter, explaining,

"A man like me, who has never medled in Politics, & who Cannot, of Course, possess a Squadron of Enthusiastic Friends, is not likely to Sell a dear Print. A Cheap one will answer better among the men of Science, many of whom have honoured Russel's Print with a Place in their apartment."<sup>483</sup>

Banks preferred Russell's smaller, more informal portrait to the more pompous and elaborate canvasses by Reynolds and West, which were stuffed with drapery and artefacts linked to his voyages. The only artefact in Russell's portrait is a pastel drawing of the moon by Russell himself. To make this authorship clear, Banks presents the lunar image with its inscription "Carte de la Lune par J. Russell" clearly visible to the viewer.<sup>484</sup> By incorporating his own work into this portrait of the President of the Royal Society, and by making it the focus of the painting, Russell commemorated himself to a great extent and produced more than a portrait of Banks. In fact, the image reflects the relationship between painter and sitter, who shared common interests in natural philosophy. In the numerous later print copies of this popular portrait, the moon map tellingly either completely disappears or is replaced by other maps.<sup>485</sup>

The Banks portrait had inaugurated Russell as a portrait painter of natural philosophers. Following the President of the Royal Society, Russell portrayed at least a dozen Fellows, among them the leading natural philosophers of his time, such

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<sup>482</sup> Shown at the RA 1788, Chambers (ed.), 2000, p.288 (FN4).

<sup>483</sup> Banks to Thomas Phillips RA, FRS, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1808, quoted *ibid.*, Letter 110, p.287.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, quotes the inscription, p.288 (FN4).

<sup>485</sup> Collyer engraved the portrait including the moon map in 1789 (see Williamson's photo collection at GHG). There is an engraving of the Russell painting without any attribute in the *European Magazine* (Ridley, 1802). Another version of this composition, by Laurens, is at the NMM (PAD3306). The NMM further possesses a print by Westermayr, where Banks is depicted with a map of Africa.

as the above-mentioned botanists the Rev. Martyn (1793, RA), Aylmer Bourke Lambert (1761-1842), and the founder of the Linnean Society, Sir James Edward Smith (1759-1828) (RA 1799). Russell further portrayed the zoologist George Shaw (1751-1813) (1803),<sup>486</sup> and the astronomers William Wales (1734-98) (1794), Sir William Herschel (1738-1822) (1794, RA 1795), and Nevil Maskelyne (1732-1811) (1804).<sup>487</sup> In 1786, Russell also exhibited the portraits of the infamous pioneers of ballooning John Jeffries (1744-1819) and Francois Pilatre de Rozier (1754-85), at the time of their first flights in the mid-1780s. This relationship to natural philosophers had a significant impact on Russell's fortunes as a painter, as they – together with their families – constituted a substantial resource of sitters. Furthermore, this contact with pioneers of the investigation of nature inspired Russell, time after time, to make his own observations of nature. The artist's sketchbooks contain drawings in which he traced the flight paths of balloons through the sky or in which he observed the filling of the balloons with gas.<sup>488</sup> When Ryland proclaimed, "That there is a God, all nature cries aloud through all her works",<sup>489</sup> he invited his readers' curiosity about the nature of these works. Russell was certainly interested, and this interest brought him close to the natural philosophers of his time. Whatever their individual inspiration to investigate nature might have been, he maintained a dialogue with them. Some of them, most prominently Sir Joseph Banks, did not share Russell's religious beliefs, but they nevertheless sparked the painter's curiosity in nature, and enabled him to contemplate the natural world in his religious terms.

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<sup>486</sup> The portraits of Shaw and Lambert seem to be connected with Russell's involvement with Thornton's botany project. (Thornton, 1804, No.xlv, p.46).

<sup>487</sup> He furthermore portrayed George Keate (1788, RA), William Mann Godschall (1791), the Rev. James Stanier Clarke (RA 1796), James Ware, and William Hey.

<sup>488</sup> Russell's sketchbooks contain a number of sketches of another great balloonist's, Blanchard's, activities (RSB G, pp.47-51). The sketches give only rough outlines of the landscapes and focus on the sky, where the progress of balloons is sometimes tracked with dots, one of them being inscribed "Mr. Blanchards experiment with a cat let down with a parachute 3.6.1785". A different type of sketch (Ibid., pp.53, 55) illustrates the different stages of the preparation of the ascent, with steam and fumes surrounding the balloon.

<sup>489</sup> Ryland, Vol.1, 1780, p.6.

## The Real Human Body

The combination of his religious motivation and curiosity stemming from natural philosophy proved particularly productive for Russell in his function as a portraitist of medical doctors, and as a medical observer and illustrator. Medicine naturally combined Evangelicals' compassion and their interest in investigating nature in the form of the human body. The importance of compassion within the Evangelical Revival, as well as in the Sensibility movement, was inherent in the contemporary attitude towards the deserving poor. Medicine, however, provided a more specialised and very effective way of showing compassion. John Wesley's *Primitive Physick* (1747), with its emphasis on straightforward usefulness, was widely read.<sup>490</sup> In it, Wesley encourages the investigation of symptoms of both body and mind, something unusual at the time. Like Milne, who attempted to open botany to the general public, Wesley opposed the "intentional obscurity" of the increasingly theoretical professionals.<sup>491</sup> Struck by the senselessness and apparent cold-heartedness of his professional colleagues, Wesley muses in his Journal,

"Why then do not all physicians consider how far bodily disorders are caused or influenced by the mind, and in those cases which are utterly out of their sphere call in the assistance of the minister; as ministers, when they find the mind disordered by the body, call in the assistance of a physician? But why are these cases out of their sphere? Because they know not God. It follows, no man can be a thorough physician without being an experienced Christian."<sup>492</sup>

As late as the mid nineteenth century, Walcott Richards M.D. pointed out to his fellow physicians that a medical doctor had "unequalled opportunities of winning others to Christ."<sup>493</sup> Medicine could have a distinctly Christian motivation.

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<sup>490</sup> Lobo: 'John Haygarth, smallpox and religious Dissent in Eighteenth century England', in: Cunningham and French (eds.), 1990, pp.217-253, here: p.228; Hill, 1958, pp.1, 4-5. Wesley was a pioneer of electricity in medicine. Together with Richard Lovett, a lay clerk at Worcester Cathedral, he published *The Desideratum, or, Electricity made Plain and Useful* (1760).

<sup>491</sup> "Although naked empiricism of the type advocated by John Wesley had, as far as I know, few medical defenders in the eighteenth century, a less systematic medicine certainly did." (C. Lawrence: 'Ornate Physicians and Learned Artisans: Edinburgh Medical Men, 1726-1776', in: Bynum and Porter, 1985, pp.153-176, here p.155.

<sup>492</sup> Hill, 1958, p.22.

<sup>493</sup> Wolcott, c.1860, p.45.

The practical potential of medicine inspired Methodists, such as the Rev. Henry Peckwell and Dr. William Hey, to study medicine. While Wesley argued that the knowledge of general remedies should be made widely available, the Rev. Peckwell wanted to go even further. Russell, who frequently listened to him preach and who was a regular member of Peckwell's private Methodist society, painted the medical preacher's portrait in the mid-1770s and exhibited it at the Academy in 1775.<sup>494</sup> The portrait shows Peckwell, with his hand on a Bible, seated before an open window, pointing at a gathering crowd outside. A mezzotint (1774) after this painting contains the reference to John 4: 35, "Behold lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."<sup>495</sup> In 1784 Peckwell founded "The Sick Man's Friend", an interdenominational meeting place of relief and healing.<sup>496</sup> He took up medicine with "that impulsive motive" to live his philanthropy "not in view of the applause of men, but the glory of God". Peckwell became very popular as a doctor, who visited the poor "in places where the delicate physician would not enter for the largest fee" and who attempted to alleviate the sufferer's "temporal and spiritual" problems.<sup>497</sup> The preacher died, after only a few years of medical practice, from an infection which he had contracted after cutting his finger during a dissection. This incident made his determination to serve "the glory of God" famous. The writer of Peckwell's obituary summarised, "It was this that stimulated our late valuable friend, that he might be made serviceable in his two-fold capacity".<sup>498</sup>

Those Evangelicals who became involved with medicine in order to be useful to humanity in a very practical way found themselves confronted with the ill repute of the medical profession. In the second half of the eighteenth century, medicine did not enjoy the same great rocketing advances which influenced physics and chemistry at that time.<sup>499</sup> Indeed, medical caricatures in the work of Hogarth and Rowlandson illustrate the fears which surrounded the medical profession, portraying

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<sup>494</sup> RA 1775, no. 258. Russell praises the "piety which shines in Mr Peckwell the president [of the prayer society, who] is set on fire thro divine Love & is I think one of the most solidly lively [sic] preachers as well as one of the most able that I ever heard" (RD, Vol.6, p.20, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1773). Peckwell preached in the fields to thousands (Ibid., p.21, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1773, and p.22, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1773) and many more sermons took place, (for example ibid., p.46, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1773; p.54, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1774; Vol.6, p.76, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1777).

<sup>495</sup> NPG D3849. Thanks to Tim Moreton, for his help with this and other mezzotints.

<sup>496</sup> DNB, Vol. xlv, 1895, p.198, entry on Peckwell.

<sup>497</sup> Anon., 1787, p.46.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., p.62.

<sup>499</sup> W.F.Bynum: *Health, Disease and Medical Care*, in: Rousseau and Porter, 1980, pp.211-253, here: pp.211-214.

doctors as quacks and their practices as unempirical.<sup>500</sup> In reality, whilst such practices existed, they were far from ubiquitous. The number of hospitals grew steadily, and by 1750 most provincial towns possessed at least one such institution. Bynum describes medicine as “a major outlet of philanthropy” and states that hospitals tended to be religious institutions “and the successful hospital stay would find the discharged patient improved in body, morals, and spirit.”<sup>501</sup> The Infirmary in Leeds held a library for patients containing books such as *Whole Duty of Man*, *The great importance of religious Life*, Ken’s *Directions for Prayer*, and Stonehouse’s *Admonitions against Swearing*. The religious instruction of the patients was clearly on the agenda.<sup>502</sup> Moral instruction, such as promoted in the exemplary Leeds infirmary, became a major concern in hospitals in general from the 1780s onwards.<sup>503</sup>

William Hey, who has been mentioned above as Russell’s connection to Leeds’ Evangelical society, was one of the most popular Methodist Medics and the heart and soul of Leeds Infirmary (fig.68).<sup>504</sup> When Hey opened this institution in 1771, the local press proclaimed it to be “dedicated to mercy and christian charity”.<sup>505</sup> Hey repeated this claim in his publications. The compassionate surgeon opens his *Practical Observations on Surgery* (1803) with a mission statement, writing that it “will afford me pleasure if the following sheets should be the means of alleviating, in any degree, the distresses of the afflicted.”<sup>506</sup> Indeed, the first annual report of the Leeds Infirmary reflects on the high standards that had been reached in the care for the sick, including a “good and proper diet” as well as advanced ideas such as “airy Rooms, with clean Furniture, and the constant attendance of Persons well approved for their Dilligence and Tenderness”. In this way, so the first annual report summarised, “the poorest have, in this Method of

<sup>500</sup> Williams, 1975. One of many possible examples is Rowlandson’s “A Visit to the Doctor”, colour etching, 1818, National Library of Medicine, where the patient is depicted approaching the medic, who says: “You eat well, you drink well and you sleep well...Depend upon it, I will give you something that shall do away all these things”. ([www.medmatters.net/journals.html](http://www.medmatters.net/journals.html), 5.8.04.)

<sup>501</sup> Bynum: “Health, Disease and Medical Care”, in: Rousseau, 1980, pp.211-253, here: 235.

<sup>502</sup> Anning, Vol.1, 1963, pp.84-85, states that this library was installed in 1775, when it contained ten titles. In 1774 the Board thanked the Rev. Mr. Disney, who had been the attending minister for six year, “for his kind hint tending to improve the Minds of the In-Patients”.

<sup>503</sup> “This [moral qualities of nursing staff] was a concern entirely characteristic of this period, in which the attributes of the middling classes were increasingly dominated by Evangelicalism.” (Perry Williams: ‘Religion, Respectability and the Origins of the Modern Nurse’, in: French and Wear (eds.), 1991, p.235.)

<sup>504</sup> Anning, Vol.1, 1963, p.6.

<sup>505</sup> *Leeds Intelligencer*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1771, on the opening of the Infirmary, quoted by Anning, Vol.1, 1963, p.10.

<sup>506</sup> Hey, 1803, p.v; see also *ibid.*, 1810, p.viii.

Charity, all the Help towards a recovery, which even those of the better Sort can reasonably expect”.<sup>507</sup> This extra care soon turned the Infirmary into one of the best-respected medical institutions in Britain with, as an inspector pointed out, “no bugs in the beds”.<sup>508</sup> Russell was close to Hey,<sup>509</sup> who became his friend and later his doctor. Russell praised Hey in 1799 as “a great man in every sense. Eminent as a Surgeon & physician and no less so for his piety & universal knowledge of sciences and of men.”<sup>510</sup>

Late eighteenth-century portraits of medical men reflect the sitters’ wish to appear benevolent, to identify themselves as serious doctors and as distinct from those quacks who gave the entire profession a bad image. Ludmilla Jordanova has made the argument that the portrait image was much more important for doctors of medicine than for any other natural philosopher. She points out that, in painting any investigator of nature, an artist had to strike a potentially delicate balance between presenting the sitter as a breaker of boundaries, and avoiding aspects of the new which risked censure as unsavoury or even dangerous. This problem is particularly relevant for medical doctors, who practised a profession that was satirised for its dubious aspects. Portraits of medical men, therefore, are displays of security, depicting sober, honest, and modest men.<sup>511</sup> For this reason typical portraits of medical doctors, and Russell’s were no exceptions, employed the image of thoughtful men rather than men of action. The sitters are often presented as gentlemanly members of society, avoiding any negative associations.<sup>512</sup> Russell portrayed Hey according to this rule. The sitter is shown in third length, with his body turned to the left, and his head turned to face the viewer. In the picture, Russell reproduced the injury to the sitter’s right eye, which he had obtained as a child.<sup>513</sup> Hey’s left hand is resting on the Bible. The wig, fine coat, and the middle ground of curtain and pillar give the picture sincerity. The background contains a view of the Infirmary. The image does not obviously depicted Hey practising his profession, which is reduced to the distant hospital building. However, the sitter’s hand, and by

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<sup>507</sup> From the first annual report, in Anning, Vol.1, 1963, p.6.

<sup>508</sup> The philanthropist John Howard, FRS (1726-90), on his inspection of the Infirmary in 1784 or 1785, *Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe* (Warrington, 1789), quoted in Anning, 1963, Vol.1, p.13.

<sup>509</sup> See Chapter 2, p.40 (FN160).

<sup>510</sup> Russell, 1799, pp.10-11.

<sup>511</sup> Porter, introduction in Forrester, 1987, pp.12-13.

<sup>512</sup> Jordanova: *Medical Men*, 1997, pp.101-112.

<sup>513</sup> DNB, Vol.xxvi, 1891.



implication his skill, rest on the Bible, which is firmly placed in the corner of the portrait, catching the viewer's gaze and leading it up to the hospital. Through the use of his hands, Hey turned Revelation's instruction into real, tangible charity.<sup>514</sup> Medical knowledge, acquired through the inspiration of the Bible and used according to its instruction, was one way of living a life agreeable to God.

When Russell stayed in Leeds, he regularly spent time at the Infirmary and repeatedly accompanied Hey on his ward rounds. The artist demonstrates his interest in Hey's work by drawing a successful operation on the foot of the eighteen years old Mary Stansfield.<sup>515</sup> The surgeon, who used Russell's image in his *Practical Observation*, recorded that the girl had suffered from "caries in the metatarsal bones of one foot".<sup>516</sup> Russell commented on the case in his diary.

"I examined and drew the foot of a girl on whom he [Hey] had for the first time made a singular experiment. The bones of this girls toes were forced to be taken off which he effected up to the middle of the foot separating the sole which he preserved & brought it over the ends of the bones where it is united with the flesh on the upper part of the foot & the girl walks about the room without any material limping."<sup>517</sup>

Hey published an engraving after Russell's drawing, which shows the successful result, in his *Practical Observations* (fig.69). In a summary of the case Hey wrote,

"The advantages of this operation will sufficiently appear upon inspecting the annexed plate, in which the mutilated foot is accurately represented from a drawing made by Mr. Russell, of the Royal Academy, who happened to be in Leeds before this patient was dismissed from the Infirmary, and who favoured me with two views of the foot, elegantly painted in crayons."<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> Russell's friend, the sculptor John Bacon depicted charity in his art on a similar base. In his memorial for Thomas Guy, the founder of the London hospital which was then named after him, Guy raises a sick man to the charitable foundation. (Saunders, p.13 and Plate iv).

<sup>515</sup> Hey, 1803, p.535. The fact that Hey in his publication tells the names and describes the backgrounds of the case studies makes them appear more than "just" medical cases, and as real people who needed to be cared about.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Russell, 1799, p.11.

<sup>518</sup> Hey, 1803, p.537. The pastel is untraced.

The fact that Russell drew the result of the operation in pastel indicates that there was more than technical value attached to this successful operation; indeed it suggests that either Hey or Russell, or both, were sentimentally attached to the case. However, the drawing was doubtlessly more important in its engraved form which appeared in a popular book on surgery. This enabled the image to spread, with the result that foot amputations could be prevented where that drastic measure might not be necessary. Hey wrote, that, if it could be saved, the “remainder of the foot, with the great use of the ankle-joint, proves of great use to the patient in walking.”<sup>519</sup>

Three years after the foot-incident, in 1802, Russell witnessed and illustrated another display of Hey’s skill in relieving the suffering which was due to a medical condition. William Hutchinson suffered from “an enlargement of his nose, which had taken place fifteen years before, and had gradually increased since its commencement.”<sup>520</sup> Hey remarked on the breathing restrictions which the man suffered and on the ridicule, which he had to endure wherever he went. Both Hey’s text and Russell’s images deal with this case in a decidedly professional manner, carefully respecting the patients’ dignity (figs. 70, 71). Hey published a detailed account of the operation, which led to full recovery. The illustration, Hey commented, was again introduced to “give the best idea of the advantage which he derived from the operation.”<sup>521</sup> Russell’s images played their part to publicise and therefore to maximise the positive effect of Hey’s experience and new approaches with caries toes and tumorous noses. Knowledge and skill were the basis of any successful action, but the inspiration for the work had been Christian charity.

In addition to illustrations of the results of Hey’s benevolent work, Russell produced dissection drawings for his surgeon friend. Hey’s *Practical Observations* contain Russell’s study of a femoral hernia. Hey commented that he wanted

“to produce drawings of the parts which I had dissected. The most instructive of these drawings, which was made by Mr. Russell, Member of the Royal Academy, is here presented to the reader, engraved in a reduced form, in the annexed Plate.”<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid., p.530.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 1810, p.565.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid., p.569.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 1803, p.151.

The schematic plate (fig.72) consists of a rough outline and a legend, which enabled the reader to follow the descriptions in the text. The full plate (fig.73) attempts a more realistic and three-dimensional impression, which would be useful guidance for any surgeon operating on a hernia. Hey further describes his attempt to present the dissected body to the painter in as fresh a shape and condition as would be seen if it were a live patient in an operation. He explains,

“This ligament is not situated in the same plane with that of Poupart [in the drawing marked as (b)], but lies deeper, that is, at a greater distance from the integuments, though it is represented in the plate as nearly in the same plane, from being pushed outwards by a finger thrust down behind it, while the drawing was taken, that it might be brought more distinctly into view.”<sup>523</sup>

In the legend, Hey further explains under (i), that the “peritoneum [has been] thrust down below the femoral ligament, by a finger introduced from within the abdomen, to give some representation of the femoral hernia.”<sup>524</sup> The surgeon went to great lengths to provide as unambiguous a representation as possible, both in word and image. Realism, in this case, was the most important means of communicating the lesson that Hey had learned to other practitioners.

While dissections were indispensable for medicine, the public connected them with taboos such as body snatching, death, and the decomposition of the body.<sup>525</sup> Russell, certainly in his younger years, was no friend of the flaying of the human body. His diary vividly relates that the artist experienced the dissections at the Academy as horrible events. He recorded, that he was much more concerned with the fate of the dead person than appreciative of the opportunity to improve his knowledge of muscles and sinews. In December 1771 he recorded, “I have been in a dull frame, at night being at the academy and one of the executed Jews who suffer’d for murder this morning at Tyburn being brought for dissection much affected my spirit”.<sup>526</sup> On his way home from the Academy Russell encountered a woman who had broken her leg and “whose cries pierc’d me to the Heart [and] brought to my

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid., p.152.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>525</sup> W.F.Bynum: ‘Health, Disease and Medical Care’, in: Rousseau and Porter, 1980, pp.211-253, here: p.240.

<sup>526</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.68, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1771.

Mind the Torments of the damned in Hell". The dissection which he had just left behind doubtlessly made him impressionable for this kind of dark reflection.<sup>527</sup> Two evenings later Russell was back at the Academy, where the dissection continued. By this time he had found out the name of the executed man. Again he was "much affected by the dissection of Solomon Porter" and afterwards prayed for the "poor fall'n man at the Throne of Grace with unusual power."<sup>528</sup> By the time Russell illustrated the hernia dissection for Hey, some three decades later, the artist's aversion against the mutilation of the dead human body must have given way to the more pressing need to fulfil his potential to do good.

Russell shared his belief that human anatomy was an impressive proof of the Designer's greatness with his contemporaries.<sup>529</sup> The human body, it was widely agreed, was the crown of Creation. Ryland described it as "the most complete and finished piece of mechanism and art in the whole universe."<sup>530</sup> The botanical Rev. Colin Milne described man as "the most perfect animal".<sup>531</sup> John Flaxman (1755-1826) shared this view, stating that the "human form is the most perfect of all forms, and contains in it the principles and powers of all inferior forms." He further referred to the body as a microcosm, given by God to the people so they would realise the existence of their Creator.<sup>532</sup> In the early nineteenth century *A Catechism of Medicine* proclaimed the same point. "The powers of the animal machine [i.e. the body] mock all human invention or imitation; and we need not look further for evidences to convince the most unbelieving of the existence of a divine Creator."<sup>533</sup> In his *Natural Theology* Paley used the watch and watchmaker metaphor, arguing that the watch is to the watchmaker, what the natural world is to God. Anatomy lent itself to Paley as a good example to make his case, because he regarded both the human body and a watch as machines. Both watches and bodies, Paley argued, were made of individual parts that cooperate towards a common end, which implied a

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 11<sup>th</sup> December 1771. On the next day Russell recorded to have been "oblig'd to attend the dissection at the Royal Academy preventing my attending at St Dunstons" (Ibid., p.69, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1771).

<sup>529</sup> RSB Vol.1, no. 6. The inscription is in pencil and opposite the skull drawing. See p.97.

<sup>530</sup> Ryland, Vol.1, 1780, p.326.

<sup>531</sup> Milne, *State of Botany*, introduction to his translation of Linneaus' *Genera Plantarum*, 1771, p.5.

<sup>532</sup> Flaxman, 1829, pp.102-103; Jordanova, 1985, p.410.

<sup>533</sup> Anon., 1822, p.11.

conscious designing force.<sup>534</sup> Paley argued, that if one recognises these signs of God's design, then

“the world thenceforth becomes a temple, and life itself one continued act of adoration. [...] The change is no less than this: that, whereas formerly God was seldom in our thoughts, we can now scarcely look upon anything without perceiving its relation to him.... So that the mind, as well as the eye, may either expatiate in variety and multitude, or fix itself down to the investigation of particular divisions of the science. And in either case it will rise up from its occupation, possessed by the subject, in a very different manner [...] The works of nature want only to be contemplated.”<sup>535</sup>

Russell's involvement with several areas of natural philosophy, but most notably his anatomical studies for Hey, indicate that he shared Paley's notion that the more one knew of the works of God in nature, the better one could contemplate and adore the Creator, and the closer one would be to the Bible.<sup>536</sup> As a Christian contemplator of the divine wisdom Russell was interested in the exact anatomy of the human body for both of the reasons explored above. Firstly, he was impressed with the mere wonder of the intricately constructed body. Secondly, and in this context more weightily, he recognised that an understanding of this marvellous machine and the appliance of this knowledge in medicine would help to ease suffering among his fellow humans. A doctor could help individuals, but well illustrated publications made this help more widely available.

### **The Ideal Human Body**

Medical doctors shared their area of expertise with portrait artists. The anatomy of the human body was seminal to both professions and touched Russell, both as William Hey's medical illustrator and as an artist. As a portrait painter, Russell was

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<sup>534</sup> Le Mahieu, 1976, pp.60-61, 72. On p.79 he quotes from Paley's *Devotional Hymn to the Epiglottis*.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid., p.88, quoted from Paley's *Natural Theology*, in: *Works of William Paley*, ed. E. Paley (London, 1825), here: p.375.

<sup>536</sup> Le Mahieu, 1976, pp.89-90.

mainly interested in the upper body, head, and hands. In *Elements of Painting* he advised beginners in pastel painting to gain a good understanding of anatomy if they were ever to produce satisfactory figures.

“The Knowledge of Anatomy, so far as relates to the Structure of the Bones, and Disposition of the Muscles, with their origin and insertion, will enable the Student to draw the human Figure in great perfection. This may be acquired by studying some good treatise on the subject, and by drawing the Bones and Muscles in different views.”<sup>537</sup>

Russell recommended his students to follow Le Brun’s *Lectures on the Passions of the Soul*, which “will impart great knowledge in the expression of the Muscles of the Face”.<sup>538</sup> The textbooks available during the late eighteenth century were mainly very old and either too expensive or too much oriented towards medicine to be of great use to the artist.<sup>539</sup> While Russell gave no further advice on which anatomical treatises students should consult to advance their drawing, his own sketchbooks contain several anatomical drawings that are unmistakably based on the classics of anatomical literature. One of Russell’s most important sources was Vesalius’ *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543). Russell’s drawing of an upper body skeleton which is bent forwards, leaning on the elbows, is a reverse copy of the upper body in Vesalius’ full figure image of “bones of the human body presented from the posterior aspect” (figs. 74, 75).<sup>540</sup> From the sketchbooks that have survived it appears that Russell only copied skeletal and muscular drawings, and did not draw the inner organs or blood vessels. Indeed, an in-depth knowledge of the latter would have been of little use to the artist, and his focus on the structural aspects of the body makes sense considering that he executed these studies as part of his artistic training. The same sketchbook contains a drawing of fragments of the arms, hands, spine, and ribs, which are copied from a walking skeleton with outstretched left arm from Albinus’ *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani* (1747) (figs. 76, 77).<sup>541</sup> Albinus’ skeletons, which are set in elaborate landscapes with rich and exotic

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<sup>537</sup> Russell, 1777, p.14.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., pp.14-15.

<sup>539</sup> Flaxman and Robertson, 1833. In their introduction (p.6) Flaxman and Robertson express the hope that the volume may “supply an important deficiency in the artist’s educational apparatus.”

<sup>540</sup> Singer, 1946; Vesalius, plate 23, first Volume. Russell’s drawing of a skeleton from the lower ribs down to the knees (RSB, Vol.1, p.6) is the lower part of Vesalius’ image.

<sup>541</sup> Albinus, 1747; Kemp, 2000, cat. 301; RSB, Vol.1, p.19.

foliage, were widely popular. This popularity is illustrated by the fact that Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-97) copied the aforementioned Albinus figure in his “The Old Man and Death” (1774).<sup>542</sup> Russell’s copies of muscle sketches further include the opening illustration of Vesalius’ muscle section, a frontal view of an écorché in contra post.<sup>543</sup> Russell imitated the original’s treatment of muscle texture, but, in accordance with his violent rejection of sexuality, he did not copy the genitals.<sup>544</sup>

In addition to the study of such anatomical textbooks, Russell recommended the reader of his *Elements of Painting* to attend “some Dissections, if he has an opportunity”.<sup>545</sup> He gave this advice despite his own strong dislike of dissections, which he had recorded only a year before publishing his textbook. Instead, Russell declared that watching a real body being taken apart, “will improve the Student much sooner than any other method possibly can.”<sup>546</sup> It is furthermore likely that Russell was aware of the écorché sculptures at the Royal Academy, which were casts from dissected bodies.<sup>547</sup> However, no source can be found for Russell’s studies of hands (figs. 78, 79).<sup>548</sup> One of these sketches illustrates the sinews and muscles of the left hand. On the following page he drew a complete hand. This approach of drawing the hand twice suggests that Russell studied the anatomy carefully and then used his knowledge in the depiction of a complete hand. A careful inspection of the drawings reveals that the complete version differs considerably from the anatomical study. While the basic position of the hand is the same in both images, the knuckles, sinews, and the position of the fingertips observed in the first image do not necessarily correspond with the second. It is also intriguing to note that Russell’s anatomical studies often do not consistently show muscle or bone or sinew, but often show a combination, so that, for example, the

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<sup>542</sup> Jordanova, 1985, p.401.

<sup>543</sup> Vesalius, plate 24, second Volume. Russell copied the lower body of the figure (P.120°51.52) again in reverse composition.

<sup>544</sup> See also RSB Vol.1, numbers 24, 25, 39, 53, 57-59. Compare no. 32, which shows the same man from the back, also appears in several of Russell’s copies. Russell’s sketch no. 41 of a flayed, standing male figure as seen from behind, bears much similarity with the same subject by Antonio Cattani after Ercole Lelli “Life size male écorché from the rear” (1781) (Kemp, 2000, cat. 188, p.48, cat.188) and the same subject in Giulio Cesare Casserio’s *Tabulae Anatomicae* (1627) (Campbell, 1997, p.67). Both of these were probably based on Vesalius in the first place.

<sup>545</sup> Russell, 1777, p.14.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Among these dissection casts was a cast of an executed criminal, which had been made under William Hunter’s guidance (c.1761-62). Zoffany depicted the so called “Smugglerius” in the position of the “Dying Gladiator” (1776) in his group portrait of the RA members from 1771. See also Thomas Banks’ “Anatomical Crucifixion” (1801). (Bryant, 1991; Kemp, 2000, pp.83-90).

<sup>548</sup> RSB, Vol.1, no.23.

wrist might be shown as muscle, the knuckles might be pure bone, and the fingertips might still exhibit their nails.

Russell's hand sketches are not as elaborate as the finished hernia illustration and they should not be compared as equals, especially since the purpose behind them is different. Nevertheless, there are clearly two different attitudes towards realism inherent in the two types of image. The relaxed vagueness and artfulness of the hand drawings contrast with the almost wooden precision of the hernia illustration. While Russell considered the basics of anatomy as an absolute necessity for a painter, there appears to have been a point where artistic idealisation became more important to him than technical correctness. The artist explained what, in his mind, constituted a good painting.

“When the student paints the Neck, he should avoid expressing the Muscles too strong in the stem, nor should the Bones appear too evident on the chest, as both have an unpleasing effect, denoting a violent agitation of the body, a circumstance seldom necessary to express in Portrait Painting.”<sup>549</sup>

Russell advised the student to avoid strong “expression” and “unpleasing effect”, implying that a painter had to take active decisions in deviating from the model in order to produce an image that was in accordance with the aesthetic ideal. He continued to explain that the

“most necessary part to be expressed, and which should ever be observed, (even in the most delicate subjects) is a strong marking just above the place where the Collar Bones unite, and if the Head is much thrown over the Shoulders, some notice should be taken of the large Muscle that rises from behind the Ear, and is inserted into the Pit between the Collar Bones.”<sup>550</sup>

However, while following nature in this way, all

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<sup>549</sup> Russell, 1777, p.35.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.



“inferior Muscles should be, in general, quite avoided. The Student will find this caution necessary, as most subjects, especially this persons, have the Muscles of the Neck much more evident than would be judicious to imitate. As few Necks are too long, it may be necessary to give some addition to the stem, a fault on the other side being quite unpardonable, nothing being more ungraceful than a short Neck.”<sup>551</sup>

Indeed, in Russell’s portraits of women the necks sometimes tend towards an unlikely elongation. Examples are the mother in “Mrs. Russell and Child” (fig.41) and the girl in the left foreground in the “Cecil Children” (fig.35). Even if an artist had studied anatomy, it was Russell’s conviction that the anatomical correctness of the individual should be compromised where the rules of taste required adjustments. This willingness to deviate from reality is made very clear by the fact that Russell provided his own ideal measurements for the human figure.<sup>552</sup> This did not, however, mean that anatomical studies were pointless. Neither does this mean that Russell wanted to reject truth and with it the reference to divine design in his art. Instead, Russell’s anatomy knew two criteria of reality, which were the “real” appearance in a medically anatomical sense, and the artistic idealised form. To Russell, both were mirrors of divine Creation and had, in his eyes, a justified claim to showing the greatness of God.

In his textbook *Elements of Painting* (1772) Russell argued that nature had furnished humankind with common sense, which is the crucial basis on which universal criteria of quality and taste could be established.<sup>553</sup> Though the artist was aware that taste essentially remained a subjective matter, he reinforced the notion that man’s ability to appreciate “the elegant Arts” was due to “Nature” who “has framed us with an uniformity of Taste to furnish proper objects for that high relish, without which the Arts could never have arrived at any degree of perfection.”<sup>554</sup> Russell was convinced that God had, through nature, given to man, not only common sense and taste, but art. When Russell defended his profession as being in

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid., pp.35-36.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., pp.13-14.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 1773, Section I: “Concerning Taste”, pp.5-7. Long before Russell was made a Royal Academician in 1788 he published his *Elements of Painting with Crayons*, a text book for students of pastel painting, which reflects conservative artistic theory, but also innovative practical aspects, like the handling and making of the pastels, which Russell experimented with. After the first edition of 1772 a second edition with additions was published in London in 1777. A special edition appeared in Dublin in 1773.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 1777, pp.5-6.

the service of God, this was because he regarded art and its tasteful images as God-given media for the relating of the wonder of Creation. Alexander Gerard, in *An Essay on Taste* (1759), argued along the same lines about taste,

“It fills us with admiration of the stupendous magnitude of the mundane system. It is charmed with the regularity, order, and proportion, which every part of it displays, even the most illiterate... By [taste’s] approbation, it confirms the deductions of reason, and, by making us feel the beauty, heightens our conviction of the truth of it’s [sic] conclusions. The Newtonian theory is not more satisfying to the understanding, by the just reasonings on which it is founded, than agreeable to taste, by it’s simplicity and elegance”.<sup>555</sup>

Russell went along with the official Academy line, preferring the generalised ideal over the imperfect particular. Jordanova notes that the depiction of nude figures in art was only acceptable if they were, as she put it, “idealised almost to death”.<sup>556</sup> Because “nothing is so prejudicial or dangerous as to copy from imperfect subjects” Russell recommended some antique statues which he regarded as ideal patterns. Among them are Hercules, Jupiter, Apollo, and the Venus of Medici, “the latter, after a time, will be his [the student’s] favourite and most valuable Study.”<sup>557</sup> This purification of an image could be an expression of the artist’s devotion to the Creator, because the wisdom of God in the general construction of the human body is observed. Indeed, it could be argued that idealisation celebrated divine wisdom even more than the accurate copy of the particular, but faulty, specimen would have done.

The discussions on what was to be preferred in art, the unique particular or the idealised, spread to contemporary anatomy. The physician and anatomist William Hunter (1718-83) held the view that truth lay in the reality of things and attached importance to the reality of the human body. This view is emphasised by his involvement with the Royal Academy écorché statues which presented realism to the greatest possible extent.<sup>558</sup> Hunter’s opponent Samuel Thomas von

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<sup>555</sup> Alexander Gerard: *An Essay on Taste* (London, 1759) pp.190-191, quoted in: Solkin, 1993, p.232.

<sup>556</sup> Jordanova, 1985, pp.398-399.

<sup>557</sup> Russell, 1777, pp.10-11.

<sup>558</sup> Winckelmann maintained that, rather similarly to the way a mirror was held up for aristocracy in the imagery of the poor, the ideal forms of the nude “are supposed to be a denial of the coarsely

Soemmering (1755-1830) boasted that “we have to let our intelligence detect and remedy such deprivations” and that it was essential to “find the true norm of the organs”.<sup>559</sup> This is reminiscent of Russell’s instruction to beautify a sitter’s neck and indeed to generally beautify a portrait according to taste. Idealisation was the expression of the general concept, of design, aiding the worshipper in his contemplation by overlooking particular faults.<sup>560</sup> In Russell’s case, realism in portraiture meant going back to the blueprints and creating an image that was improved according to the rules of taste rather than an exact copy of the real object.<sup>561</sup> This, however, was no less an expression of worship than his anatomical medical studies had been. Not every follower of Reynolds’ advice to idealise and generalise did so in contemplation of God, but it seems that Russell did so.

### **Pastel as a new Tool of Worship**

Russell invested much time and effort in the perfection of his main tool of communicating worship in images, his pastel technique. Russell’s handling of the soft, intensive colours was unsurpassed by his contemporaries. Pastel was, however, an uncomfortable medium, being decidedly more vulnerable than oil painting, and was ranked lower than that technique by the Academy. Russell refused to accept this verdict of inferiority and did much to improve the quality of pastels by finding a technique for the conservation of bright colours over time. He further replaced the chalky colours of his master’s generation with brilliant tones, and found a way to guarantee longevity to a medium that was notorious for its fragility.<sup>562</sup> In *Elements of Painting* Russell provided an account of some of the improvements which he regarded as the keys to a successful pastel painting. His unrelentingly careful preparation is epitomised in the motto of his publication, “There is labour in the most trifling things”.<sup>563</sup> Among the tools he employed for his research, Russell mentions palettes, crayons, pencils, and pen-knives. Besides this basic equipment,

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sensual rhetoric that would appeal to the common people”. (Potts, 1994, p.159.) See also Jordaniova, *Happy Marriages*, 1997, pp.100-101; *ibid.*, 1985, pp.386-412, here: pp.398-399.

<sup>559</sup> Choulant, 1945, pp.302-303; Jordanova, 1985, p.398.

<sup>560</sup> Jordanova, 1985.

<sup>561</sup> The inclusion of Whitefield’s squinting and Hey’s injured eye is not in contrast with this idealisation, but rather an element of conscious humility within the carefully crafted frame of tasteful general composition.

<sup>562</sup> Russell, 1777, p.40.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, p.iv.

which the reader would expect to find in a studio, Russell's extraordinary efforts are implied by the further presence of grinding stones, large vessels, shells, impalpable powder, mortars, phials, a crucible, "fierce fire", charcoal dust, gall-stones, tin cones, earthen pans, rosemary-water, ground logwood, gum-water, and grains of pearl.<sup>564</sup> The agglomeration of such things, reflecting the painter's practical approach to work, might lead the reader to imagine the artist's workplace less as a studio, and more as a craftsman's workshop or an alchemist's den. His numerous contacts with natural philosophers might have encouraged the artist's interest in experimenting with the chemistry of his toolkit. Indeed, in the introduction to his *Elements of Painting* Russell maintained that art "may be considered as a rational science".<sup>565</sup> With the eye for detail and the curiosity of a natural philosopher, Russell not only observed, but shared his results, following the same philosophy as Wesley and Milne.

In his publication Russell claimed that the softness of the pastels was their greatest quality and therefore regarded their careful preparation as indispensable. Through experimental chemistry, in which he was heavily indebted to his late master's efforts, Russell produced material of a quality which surpassed conventional pastels.<sup>566</sup> His improvement strategy encompassed the simple but crucial basics of pastel making as well as more detailed and complicated aspects. For example he realised that lamp-black was the only black to be used safely, "as all the others are subject to mildew".<sup>567</sup> Russell advised his students to make the very scarce good lamp-black themselves and presents the instructions.

"Provide a tin cone, fix it over a lamp at such a height that the flame may just reach the cone for the foot to gather within it. When a sufficient quantity is collected, take it out, and burn all the grease from it in a crucible. It must then be ground with spirits and laid on the chalk to absorb the moisture."<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Ibid., pp.40-49; see also ibid., 1773, pp.43-51. The Dublin edition focuses more on chemistry than the London editions.

<sup>565</sup> Russell, 1777, p.i.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., pp.iii, pp.40-52.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., p.49.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

In the same way that Russell made it a cardinal rule that lamp-black was the only black to be used, he warned of flake-white and white-lead, which “should be wholly rejected, because the slightest touch with either of these will unavoidably turn black.”<sup>569</sup> If a pastel painting changed with time, then it was, according to Russell, “intirely [sic] owing to an injudicious use of the above-mentioned whites, which will stand only in Oils.”<sup>570</sup> He managed to produce pastels that not only had brilliant colour, but that also lasted so well that most of Russell’s surviving works are still in pristine condition today. Indeed, it was important to Russell that his pastels should be well looked after, so he supplied instructions for that purpose with his paintings.<sup>571</sup>

One of the things Russell mastered, and which displays an acute understanding of his medium, was coating. While coating made the painting durable, it also affected the colours, making warm colours colder and purplish, considerably changing the nature of a picture. In order to coat a painting without losing the “just imitation of nature”<sup>572</sup> pastel painters had to be able to counter this effect.<sup>573</sup> Russell cautioned painters who worked both in oil and pastel not to treat the two media the same. He wrote,

“in order to produce a rich Picture, a much greater portion of what Painters term Cooling Teints must be applied in Crayon Painting, than would be judicious to use in Oils. Without any danger of a mistake, it is to be supposed, the not being acquainted with this observation is one great cause why so many Oil-Painters have no better success when they attempt Crayon Painting. On the contrary, Crayon Painters being so much used to those Theints, which are of a cold nature when used wet, are apt to introduce them too much when they paint with Oils, which is seldom productive of a good effect.”<sup>574</sup>

Williamson praised the “brilliant and luminous colour”<sup>575</sup> and called Russell “a good chemist”, whose “pastels were pure in their pigments, and made by himself, and

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> The standard text of this instruction is given in Appendix I, p.196.

<sup>572</sup> Russell, 1777, p.18.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., pp.18-20.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>575</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.87.

having no oil or resin to yellow or darken them, [the colours] have continued to this day fresh as when first applied.”<sup>576</sup> Russell’s *Receipts for making Crayons* reveal the one ingredient which gave his paintings the softness and strong colours that other pastels lacked: “Fresh Turpentine [sic]”.<sup>577</sup> Extracted from the juice of trees, various kinds of turpentine were used in the eighteenth century as “stimulating corroborants and detergents”.<sup>578</sup> It is likely that Cotes knew about the use of turpentine in pastel painting, because as early as 1764 *The Complete Dictionary of Art and Sciences* comments that the “turpeth mineral well levigated, and washed over, makes a very fine crayon, of a cool, but very bright colour”.<sup>579</sup> However, Russell utilised turpentine to an unprecedented effect.

The impact of the improved pastel recipe is evident in Sir Joseph Banks’ opinion on Russell’s art. In a letter to a friend Banks mentions a portrait of his wife.

“Being of the opinion that the oil pictures of the present time invariably fade quicker than the persons they are intended to represent, I always declined having her painted in that manner. The picture you receive is in Crayons by the hand of a Master with whom I have lately become acquainted. I have every reason to believe that the colours he has made use of will stand”.<sup>580</sup>

Banks was so pleased with Russell’s portrait that he commissioned him to portray other members of his family.<sup>581</sup> A decade later, the newspapers hailed Russell as “the only Crayon Painter whose works will be the SCHOOL of another age, for they are as durable as they are exquisite.”<sup>582</sup> Russell’s pastels were appreciated at the Royal Academy too, even if not universally so. In November 1802, Russell being

<sup>576</sup> “The intimate commixture of chalk with the pure colour,’ says Professor Church, ‘is the very means of their preservation from the destructive agencies that attack other pigments.’ ” (ibid.)

<sup>577</sup> Russell, *Receipts*, 1884. The MS is signed on the first page, “William Russell, son of the above [i.e. J.R., R.A.] Rector of Shepperton January 7<sup>th</sup> 1862”.

<sup>578</sup> Croker, Vol.3, 1766, entry on “Turpentine”, no page numbers.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., Vol.1, 1764, entry on “crayons”, no page numbers. Russell mentioned the “Turpeth Mineral” in the Dublin edition of *Elements of Painting* in 1773 (p.50), but does not mention it in the London editions.

<sup>580</sup> Quoted from a letter by Banks to Filmer in 1789, in: Williamson, 1894, pp.1-2.

<sup>581</sup> Banks ordered a second portrait of his wife for himself, and Russell later painted Banks himself, his mother Sarah Banks, and his sister, Sophia Banks. All of these portraits were exhibited at the RA, Sir Joseph Banks’ portrait in 1788 (no.420), the ladies in 1798 (numbers 168, 169, 427, see Appendix 2, pp.200-201).

<sup>582</sup> *The World*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1792, p.3.

absent, an R.A. meeting discussed the question of whether pastel painting should be considered painting at all. Farington reported,

“Copley particularly insisted that Crayon painting was not to be admitted into the Class of Painting & called in the Members to shew him that a Crayon picture had ever been admitted from an Academician as a qualification; this caused a laugh as there was a Crayon Portrait by Cotes before him & Russells admission picture behind him.”<sup>583</sup>

Pastel was seminal for Russell's popularity as a painter. His unsurpassed, beautified but lively images were the key to his clientele, among whom natural philosophers represented a large faction. Russell's affinity with botanists, astronomers, medical doctors, and balloonists is unsurprising considering his own inquisitiveness about the world. Russell was genuinely interested in the many different branches of natural philosophy with which he met during his career, and which he considered channels to an understanding of God's Creation. Sometimes Russell's investigations appear to have remained superficial glances at a topic, which he abandoned as soon as another subject captured his fascination. Occasionally, his interest was stronger, and it inspired the artist to investigate a subject in detail. In the mid-1780s, with improved materials and in a religious frame of mind, Russell embarked upon the most time-consuming project of his life: the portrayal of the moon.

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<sup>583</sup> FD, Vol.5, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1802, p.1927.

# 5

## “This Beautiful Object”: Russell’s Moon

“Tonight being in the Street I had a sight of the Stars that God was pleas’d to preach to me from, and I had my Soul filled with the Hopes of [...] Immortality. O! what a Spiritual thing did I discover Religion to be I found that the End of it was to conform the Soul to Gods Image..”

(John Russell, *Diary*, Vol.2, p.120, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1768)

“Who can behold the spangled arch of heaven without being *charmed* and *awed*? Surely the stars *teach* as well as *shine*; and viewing them, not merely as glittering lamps, but as suns and worlds, the mind is filled with unspeakable solemnity. O what a great God! *Praise him, sun and moon; Praise him, all ye stars of light*. When my devotion expires amidst the vanities of life, let me review the stars, and kindle it again at those heavenly fires.”

(*Evangelical Magazine*, 1794, Vol.2, p.245)



### **Russell as Astronomer**

Among the assembled sheets which constitute the Rev. James Stanier Clarke's (1765-1834) *Friendship book* is a page depicting the "Telescopic appearance of the Southern Limb of the Moon on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1787 at 3 O'clock in the morning" (fig.81).<sup>584</sup> John Russell presented this watercolour to Clarke in 1796. In the same year Russell's portrait of Clarke was on show at the Royal Academy exhibition.<sup>585</sup> The choice of the lunar motif as a present suggests that painter and preacher shared an interest in the moon. It has been discussed above that many contemporary Evangelical clergymen, as well as laymen, were fascinated with the natural world. Astronomy was no exception. Though records of conversations between Russell and his Evangelical acquaintances about astronomy are rare, the artist's drawings and paintings leave no doubt at his prolonged fascination with the moon. One autumn evening in 1766, Russell noted in his diary that his depressed spirits had plagued him for some time. However, he recorded, that "Contemplation on seeing the Moon to night [sic] was with Satisfaction as it Enliv'ned my faith and Prayer has been at Night with Power."<sup>586</sup> This association of the moon with a renewal of faith was very likely one of the motivations for Russell to spend many years producing a unique array of lunar images. Indeed, Russell's lunar work is the most impressive illustration of the artist's Natural Theology, his conviction that God was immediately visible in nature. Thinly disguised as Conspector, Russell summed it up, "An undevout astronomer is mad".<sup>587</sup>

Russell considered his lunar studies no more than a private venture. He wrote, "I have many engagements and this [i.e. the moon observations] I only esteem as my amusement. I do not promise to present my efforts to the public, that must depend upon circumstances."<sup>588</sup> Over the years spent "amusing" himself with astronomy, Russell amassed a large collection of observational sketches, which were bound in 1873 and are kept at the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford. These studies provided a basis for Russell's pastel of a gibbous moon, now in the

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<sup>584</sup> The sketch is inscribed and signed in Russell's handwriting. The Rev. Clarke's friendship book is currently for sale, see [www.artworksgallery.co.uk/book.html](http://www.artworksgallery.co.uk/book.html). I thank Simon Wheeler for his kind assistance.

<sup>585</sup> RA 1796, no.174. Clarke was librarian to the Prince Regent, who commissioned Russell repeatedly in the early to mid-1790s.

<sup>586</sup> RD, Vol.1, p.210, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1766. See also Chapter 2, p.57.

<sup>587</sup> EM, 1793, Vol.2, p.118.

<sup>588</sup> HOR, pp.94-95.

possession of Birmingham Museum and Art Galleries (fig.80).<sup>589</sup> The pastel's measurements, 23 ½ by 17 ½ inches, correspond to those of Russell's portraits. The painter created a strong contrast between the pale lunar surface, consisting of a variety of tones from white to grey-green, and the impenetrable dark blue background. The pastel bears the inscription "Painted from Nature by John Russell R.A." and dates from the mid-1790s, the zenith of the artist's interest in the moon. Around that time Russell painted another composition similar to the Birmingham moon pastel. This second moon pastel is in a bad state of preservation and, with the diameter of 52 by 60 inches, considerably larger than the Birmingham pastel (fig.82). It is located, together with the observational sketches, at the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford.<sup>590</sup> Shortly after painting these pastels, Russell patented the *Selenographia*, a highly sophisticated brass moon globe measuring 12 inches in diameter and 20 inches in height (figs. 83, 84). This apparatus featured an accurate representation of the lunar surface and was furthermore capable of demonstrating the librations. A pamphlet containing a detailed description of the *Selenographia* accompanied the apparatus. Russell's last moon images were two engravings of the full moon, one a realistic representation and the other synthesised from various angles of lunar illumination. These engravings, which bear resemblance with photographs of the respective subjects, were edited and published posthumously by the artist's son as the *Lunar Planispheres* (1809) (figs. 85, 86, 87, 88).

The previous chapter investigated Russell's wide-ranging interests in natural philosophy, his involvement in medical as well as in artistic studies of human anatomy, and his improvements of his pastels through chemical experiment. The scale of these efforts was however dwarfed by the endurance which the pastel painter mustered in two decades of lunar observations.<sup>591</sup> A visit to Russell's home prompted Farington to comment on the great intensity of the artist's astronomical work. Farington wrote that he was "highly gratified by seeing the different representations" which Russell had made of the moon. The diarist further recalls the painter's claim to have spent, since the beginning of the undertaking some seven

<sup>589</sup> *World Art, Review of the National Art Collections Fund*, BMAG 1999, No. 56. The pastel went by descent to the artist's daughter Henrietta Ann. After many further owners, it came to the BMAG in 1957. The pastel is at times on show at Soho House. Thanks to Tessa Sidey for her kind help.

<sup>590</sup> The RAS purchased three pastel sketches of the moon in 1895. No. 223/1 shows a full moon, no. 223/2 depicts a gibbous moon. No.223/3 shows two crescents in one frame. These pastels are rougher than the Birmingham moon or the Oxford image and the pencil under-drawing shines through. The SciM holds another pastel sketch which unifies a half moon and another fragment on one sheet.

<sup>591</sup> Dekker, 1999, p.126. No moon sketches by Russell after 1800 are known.

years ago, “6 Hours out of 24 calculating an average number, in experiments, in drawing or in making calculations.”<sup>592</sup> On Russell’s death, Farington gave the following summary of the artist’s “very singular” use of his working hours, which were adjusted to night work.

“Finding that if He ate a dinner at the usual time it made him very heavy & incapable of application during the remainder of the evng, He was accustomed to eat His Substantial meal in the morning at breakfast time.  
– His professional application was very great, & to that and to his study of the appearance of the moon, He often devoted the Hours of the night till 2 or 3 oClock in the morning.”<sup>593</sup>

Russell’s friend, the astronomer and botanist Sir Henry Englefield, F.R.S. (1752-1822), confirmed that the artist had a sedulous attitude to life, writing, “Those only who witnessed the perseverance of Mr. Russell for nearly twenty years in this pursuit [i.e. astronomy], can form an idea of the difficulties which he surmounted.”<sup>594</sup>

In a letter to the Oxford astronomer Thomas Hornsby (1733-1810) Russell gave an account of his own astronomical history. This document dates from 1789, when Russell was heavily involved with the moon studies.<sup>595</sup> He wrote,

“About twenty-five years since I first saw the Moon through a Telescope, which I now recollect must have been about two Days after the first Quarter; you will conclude how much struck a young Man conversant with Light, and Shade, must be with the Moon in this state, especially, as I was not taught to expect such clearness and expression, as is to be found near and upon the indented Edge; a few Days after I made a small Drawing, but the Moon being at the Full, I was not struck in the same

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<sup>592</sup> FD, Vol.1, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1793, p.110.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., Vol.8, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1806, p.2887.

<sup>594</sup> In Russell, 1809, p.[5], Englefield called himself “a friend” of John Russell. Ryan, 1966, p.39, talks about the 2-feet-diameter relief globe which Russell had produced. He refers to Rigaud’s notebook (Rigaud, Appendix 3, Item 11), when writing that at least one of these was built for Englefield, at his death it was bought by Mr. Stock who kept a school at Poplar.

<sup>595</sup> This lengthy letter is a major source on Russell’s astronomical work. The original letter is at OMS, but it has been published by Stone, in *MNRAS*, 1896, which is the copy used in this thesis.

manner, and I made no more attempts, till an accidental possession of a powerful Glass awakened my attention to this beautiful Object once more, and for several years I have lost few opportunities when the Atmosphere has exhibited the Object of my study and imitation.”<sup>596</sup>

The telescope which Russell found himself “accidentally” possessing, and which rekindled his interest in the moon, was a Dollond refractor and a present from his close friend and fellow Methodist John Bacon, who was interested in astronomy himself.<sup>597</sup> Russell’s first small moon sketch, which he mentioned in his letter to Hornsby, now features as the first page of the album of observational sketches in Oxford (fig.89). It is inscribed,

“Drawn about the year 1764

This is the first drawing I ever made from the moon. J R.”<sup>598</sup>

A third line, written in a different handwriting and with different ink, causes some contrariety. It names “the Garden of John Bacon R.A. 17 Newman Street” as the location of this first moon observation in 1764. This is unlikely to be true, because the sculptor did not move into the given address until the mid-1770s, some ten years after the sketch. A further inconsistency is that Russell recorded in his diary that he only became friends with Bacon in 1785, around the time when he wholeheartedly commenced his astronomical studies. Despite these contradictions it is certain that Bacon did indeed inspire Russell’s astronomical work, and the two astronomical Methodists lived in the neighbourhood of Newman Street until Bacon’s death in 1799.<sup>599</sup> It is possible that whoever wrote the third line of the caption wanted to emphasise the connection between Russell and Bacon, and that that person assumed that Bacon’s well known address was older than it really was.<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> HOR, p.91.

<sup>597</sup> Ryan, 1966, p.35; Saunders, 1961, p.18.

<sup>598</sup> Russell, ALBUM, p.1; Ryan, 1966, p.33.

<sup>599</sup> Saunders, 1961, p.1.

<sup>600</sup> There is however an inconsistency with the 1760s date. Russell’s diary reveals that he and Bacon became close friends in 1785, the time when Russell developed a serious and lasting interest in astronomy. Russell mentions Bacon in his diary in August 1785 as having been “very intimate with me ever since” their first meeting in May of that year (RD, Vol.8, p.67, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1785; *ibid.*, p.68, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1785; *ibid.*, p.70, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1785).

Bacon was not the only contemporary to inspire Russell's astronomical work. The Rev. Romaine held a professorship in astronomy at Gresham College and, being close to Russell, the two men very likely exchanged their views in that field.<sup>601</sup> Stephen Peter Rigaud (1774-1839), who was Savilian Professor of Astronomy in Oxford, claimed that Sir Joseph Banks and other natural philosophers displayed a lively interest in the commencement of the pastel painter's lunar studies. Rigaud wrote in his notebook,

“The origin of his [Russell] applying himself to drawing the Moon was from a conversation at Sir Joseph Banks in which he was pressed to undertake it [i.e. drawing the moon] by some men of Science, who would not let him rest till he had promised to comply with their wishes.”<sup>602</sup>

Banks' involvement with this singular undertaking is also indicated by Russell's portrait of the President of the Royal Society holding one of the artist's own lunar studies (fig.93).<sup>603</sup> Russell certainly valued the help he received from his astronomical acquaintances. In return for their assistance, he painted his advisors, who further included the surveyor Joseph Lindley and the astronomer William Wales, who had travelled with James Cook.<sup>604</sup> Russell also hoped that the final products of his studies should give “some satisfaction” “to those Gentlemen who have honoured me by inspecting the preparatory Drawings”.<sup>605</sup> Russell's advisors may not have shared his religious natural philosophy. Nevertheless, they aided Russell with a task which would take on a distinctly religious dimension for him, and which he discussed with other Evangelicals, such as Bacon and Clarke, in that light.

Russell definitely received help from William Herschel, whom he had portrayed holding a piece of paper advertising the sitter's celebrated discovery of Uranus in 1781 (fig.94). In a letter from 1799, Russell thanked the famous

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<sup>601</sup> DNB, entry on William Romaine, Vol.xlix, 1897, pp.175-177.

<sup>602</sup> Rigaud, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1824, pp.2-3.

<sup>603</sup> Via this loop way, Russell's moon image found its way into the RA exhibition. Williamson, 1894, p.118, states that there was an exhibition of the moon sketches in 1768 in the Society of Artists of Great Britain. There is, however, no indication of this event in other sources and the date for this supposed exhibition predates Russell's moon studies, which commenced in the mid-1780s

<sup>604</sup> For the Wales portrait (1794) see Christie's, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1987, p.99, Lot no.146. Williamson, 1894, p.152: The portrait of Joseph Lindley (1794) was “Done as an act of friendship in return for some astronomical calculations made by Lindley for Russell.”

<sup>605</sup> HOR, p.92.

astronomer for lending him a telescope.<sup>606</sup> Russell's dedication of the second plate of his *Lunar Planispheres* to Herschel could be understood as a further acknowledgment of the astronomer's support. In the letter, Russell expressed his gratitude.

"I hope my grateful feelings are known, which have been excited by your unmerited favors. The loan of the admirable Instrument now returned, joined to the honour of your countenance and Favour respecting my Lunar publication".<sup>607</sup>

Russell consulted Bacon, Herschel, and Hornsby for advice on telescopes.<sup>608</sup> After thanking Hornsby for his "unmerited willingness to give me assistance" Russell explained his concern,

"which induces me to trouble you once more to read a Letter from me, containing my ardent Request to be indulged with a sight of the Drawing of [the crater] Tycho [...] by which I may receive considerable hints, [...] how much superior utility there is, in a Telescope of power considerably beyond the one I use, in delineating the Moon".<sup>609</sup>

Russell was "not so fully convinced"<sup>610</sup> of the superiority of larger telescopes over smaller ones and he experimented with different sizes of lens.<sup>611</sup> The two devices which Russell is known to have used, were Herschel's six-foot long reflector, with a six-inch mirror, and Bacon's smaller Dollond telescope. One of the sketches in the Oxford album is clearly attributed to Herschel's telescope (fig.90).<sup>612</sup> However, Rigaud recalled, "although Dr. Herschel had provided him with a reflector – Mr.

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<sup>606</sup> "On your return I hope you found the Telescope &c. arrived safe concerning which I troubled Miss Herschel with a letter as advised by Mr Professor Wilson." The letter is dated 12<sup>th</sup> April 1799, RAS library, R.15. I am most grateful to Peter Hingley for pointing this out to me! See also Ryan, 1966, p.35.

<sup>607</sup> RAS library, R.15.

<sup>608</sup> Bacon made sculptures for the Oxford observatory: two life-sized bronzes of Hercules and Atlas supporting a copper globe on the roof (1784), and reliefs of the winds for the façade (1792-94). (Saunders, pp.28-29, and plate vii).

<sup>609</sup> HOR, p.90.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> Ryan, 1966, p.33. All the sketches are gathered in the Oxford album, but it is likely that they are not all that Russell ever produced.

<sup>612</sup> ALBUM, no.71; Ryan, 1966, p.35.

Russel [sic] made very little use of it”<sup>613</sup> and that the painter-astronomer “preferred a low power in examining the moon”.<sup>614</sup> In order to express the lunar surface in its entirety, Russell needed the overview that the smaller telescope could provide more than he needed great detail (fig.91). Also, from the point of view of practicability, the large Herschel instrument was rather unwieldy, while the handy Dollond could easily be moved around.<sup>615</sup> Nevertheless, Russell’s letter to Herschel and his dedication in the *Lunar Planispheres* express the artist’s appreciation of the astronomer’s help.

By making statements such as “I want to approach as near as may be to perfection”,<sup>616</sup> Russell left it beyond doubt that his ambition was to produce the most convincing lunar images possible. In order to reach the desired “perfection” the artist followed a twofold observing strategy. On the one hand he observed small parts of the moon to gain detailed information about their structure. In order to consolidate his knowledge, he repeated observations of certain mountains or mares under different libration conditions and light effects. Following the same practice as he had in his anatomical drawings, Russell also interspersed his moon sketches with detailed notes in English and shorthand.<sup>617</sup> For example, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1788, the entry reads,

“This evening being very clear I was able to measure the Moon with the micrometer very accurately & I find there is a considerable difference between the polar diameter & the diameter between Crisium & Grimaldi the former being now 2345 only while the other measures exactly 2345 and 6”.<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> Rigaud, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1825, p.7.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>615</sup> Russell’s written and drawn astronomical documents do not reveal the location from which Russell observed the night sky. It is possible that he observed through the windows of his London house. The Oxford sketch collection contains a sketch from April 1794, which Russell inscribed, “Drawn at Sir H. Englefield’s House, Tilney Street” (p.174).

<sup>616</sup> HOR, p.94.

<sup>617</sup> P. Moore: *Moon Maps*, in: Murdin, 2001, Vol. ii, p.1766. Schroeter, like Russell, spent many years observing the night sky and was acquainted with Herschel who provided him too with a 7-inch reflector telescope. Schroeter was the first to show the lunar rills clearly and also provided a better measurement of the lunar mountains than had been available before. His most important publication was *Selenographische Fragmente zur genauen Kenntnis der Mondflaeche* (1791).

<sup>618</sup> ALBUM, no.69. Quoted in Ryan, 1966, pp.34-35.

Russell tried to create accurate snapshots, and on the other hand tried to obtain a precise overview of the lunar surface (fig.92). In his letter to Hornsby, Russell explained the need “to measure the distances of as many parts as will set the rest in their proper places. As I have no micrometer such as would describe minutes &c. [...] I have constructed one which serves my purpose.”<sup>619</sup> It is likely that Russell was assisted in these calculations by his brother in law, William Faden (1750-1836), who was Geographer to the King, and who published the *Selenographia* gores and the *Lunar Planispheres*.<sup>620</sup> Russell portrayed Faden pointing at an indefinable object which might be interpreted as a globe (fig.95).<sup>621</sup>

Of his astronomical acquaintances, Russell was particularly close to Nevil Maskelyne, whom he portrayed late in life, in 1804, with a distant view of Greenwich Observatory (fig.96).<sup>622</sup> Rigaud remarked that Russell spent a noteworthy amount of time observing “some cavities in the central part [of the moon] which were only distinguished in the full moon & which Dr Maskelyne had called ‘Russel’s pits’ ”.<sup>623</sup> This anecdote indicates that the Astronomer Royal and the artist conversed on the subject of the moon. This notion is strengthened by the fact that Russell dedicated one of his *Lunar Planispheres* to Maskelyne, while he had dedicated the other one to Herschel.<sup>624</sup> Another comment from Maskelyne on Russell, which has survived in two different sources, supplies further evidence of their friendship. Rigaud claims to have copied the following epigram from an inscription in Maskelyne’s “own hand on one of the lunar globes”.<sup>625</sup> It reads,

“In Johanem Russelium Lunae pictorem  
Ne prope viderrunt Actaeon Endymionque  
Hos memini solos; est ubi Russelius?”

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<sup>619</sup> HOR, p.94.

<sup>620</sup> Rigaud, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1824, p.2.

<sup>621</sup> The portrait is now on show in the BL main building at St. Pancras. Rigaud (p.2) mentioned Faden as one of Russell’s sources of help in astronomical questions.

<sup>622</sup> Russell portrayed Maskelyne’s wife Sophia in the same year. Howse, 1989, frontispiece and p.164, reproduces a sketch of Maskelyne by Russell, which is dated into the 1770s. While the sketch is doubtlessly by Russell (compare for example to the very similar sketches of the Hill brothers at the NPG 1464 and 1465), this date might be too early. Howse says that Russell got interested in astronomy then, but this is not the case. See pp.134-135.

<sup>623</sup> Rigaud, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1825, p.12.

<sup>624</sup> Russell, 1809, pp.[1-2].

<sup>625</sup> Rigaud, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1825, p.12. No lunar globe with such an inscription has yet been found.



Auctore Nevil Maskelyne, A.R.”<sup>626</sup>

Ryan translated this as follows,

“On John Russell, painter of the Moon.  
Actaeon and Endymion did not see [the moon] closely.  
Them alone we remember; But where is Russell?  
By Nevil Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal.”<sup>627</sup>

A slightly different version is related in Rees’ *Cyclopedia*, where the middle lines of the verse are translated as

“Actaeon and Endymion saw me near:  
But when did I to Russell thus appear?”<sup>628</sup>

Both translations of Maskelyne’s admiring but melancholic verse convey the astronomer’s realisation that Russell knew more about the moon than the two mythical figures who were famous for their intimate acquaintance with the moon.<sup>629</sup> Maskelyne correctly predicted that, although Russell had studied the moon like no other, this would not save his efforts from being forgotten. Most contemporaries and historians disregarded Russell’s lunar work because the end products of Russell’s careful research were neither maps nor works of art.

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<sup>626</sup> The sketch album, OMS, contains this message written on a piece of paper and glued in on the first page of the album. Ryan, 1966, p.44, prints it and provided the translation.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Rees, *Cyclopedia*, Vol. 22, 1812, entry on Maskelyne, quoted in Howse, 1989, p.167. In this source the two middle lines of the verse are given exactly as Maskelyne wrote them down (see ALBUM, glued-in note):

“Me prope viderunt Actaeon, Endymionque;  
Hos memini solos; ast ubi Russelius?”.

While the “Me” is original and Ryan changed it into “Ne”, the “ast” in this version, which is grammatically supposed to be an “est”, has been corrected by Ryan in his version. The Rees translation dwells solely on this part of the third line (“est ubi Russelius?”) and ignores the first part, “Hos memini solos”, which Ryan translates as “Them alone we remember”.

<sup>629</sup> Actaeon, according to Greek legend, had been a hunter who surprised the moon goddess in the bath. Endymion was the beautiful shepherd who was turned to sleep so Selene could come down from the sky and kiss him. *Lexikon der Antike*, pp.24, 62, 156.

## **Russell's Mysterious Moon between Astronomy and Art**

One of the most puzzling aspects of the interpretation of Russell's moon images is that they resist explicit categorisation as either astronomical or artistic objects. Russell was certainly interested in the astronomical aspect of his work. With great determination, and assisted with theoretical as well as practical advice, Russell became familiar with historical and contemporary moon maps. In his *Lunar Planispheres* he gives a short account of the development of lunar cartography.<sup>630</sup> He mentions the leading seventeenth-century maps by Johannes Hevelius (1611-87), Giovanni Battista Riccioli (1598-1671), and Giovanni Cassini (1625-1712).<sup>631</sup> The most influential moon observer in the second half of the eighteenth century was Tobias Mayer (1723-62). Mayer's lunar map (fig.97), which was published posthumously in 1775, marked the beginning of a new era of lunar cartography. Instead of measuring the lunar surface by eye, Mayer introduced the more accurate micrometric measurement, which Russell also used.<sup>632</sup> For many decades Mayer's map remained the most precise lunar chart available.<sup>633</sup> Russell praised it and wrote that it "deserves very honourable mention."<sup>634</sup> However, Farington's diary reveals a more critical comment by Russell towards the latest in lunar mapping. When the diarist visited Russell at his home in Newman Street in 1793, he recorded that the painter complained about the "manifest errors in the representations [of the moon] which have been given by others." Farington quotes Russell as having said that the map "of Cassini is very incorrect, - & that of Mayer exhibits no Knowledge of the librations."<sup>635</sup> Russell also commented on the more recent maps by Johann Hieronymus Schröter (1745-1816), a lay observer who was generally accepted in the world of astronomy, but whose work did not meet Russell's high standards. Russell complained that the "spots are drawn separately, and in general appear very inaccurate."<sup>636</sup> Russell did not hide his dissatisfaction with the existing maps, even if they were accepted in astronomical circles. As an astronomical cartographer he wanted to do much better himself.

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<sup>630</sup> This list is published in Ryan, 1966, pp.43-44.

<sup>631</sup> Brown, 1932, pp.122-132; Herrmann, 1984, pp.64-68; P. Moore: "Moon Maps", in Murdin (ed.) 2001, Vol.ii, pp.1766-1767; HOR, p.90.

<sup>632</sup> See pp.138-139.

<sup>633</sup> Herrmann, 1984, p.199.

<sup>634</sup> Russell, 1809, p.[4]; Ryan, 1966, p.44.

<sup>635</sup> FD, Vol.1, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1793, p.110.

<sup>636</sup> Russell, 1809, p.[5]; Ryan, 1966, p.44.

Some thirty years before Russell commenced his lunar observations, an artist of his master's generation had attempted to portray the moon. During the late 1750s, the portrait painter Benjamin Wilson (1721-88), F.R.S., who was interested in electricity and who featured in a number of public disputes on lightning conductors, was involved in an undertaking similar to Russell's.<sup>637</sup> In his unpublished *Memoirs* Wilson wrote, "I was employed in making a map of the Moon with the assistance of Mr. Short the celebrated Optician".<sup>638</sup> The painter recorded that he was given telescopic equipment. Nevertheless Wilson "never perfected the Map".<sup>639</sup> He wrote,

"because I found that the necessary close attention, to observe the parts on so bright a surface as the moon, weakened my eyes considerably. Besides, as the observations were made in the open air, and in the evenings, I caught [sic] cold continually: and notwithstanding, Mr. Short offered me 100 Guineas for the drawing when completed."<sup>640</sup>

Russell's portrait of Wilson's daughter Fanny, from 1796, presents a possible link between the families, but there is no evidence that Russell's astronomical work had been in any way inspired by Wilson.<sup>641</sup> However, unlike Wilson, Russell did not give up when the observations became straining. Instead he grew continuously better at observing, as, he wrote, experience "not only made me more expert in imitating what I saw, but my powers of discernment and discrimination were considerably improved."<sup>642</sup>

Before photography replaced drawing and engraving in astronomy, artists still translated facts into images. Their interpretations decisively influenced the progress of natural philosophy. Russell saw this connection. To Hornsby he wrote,

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<sup>637</sup> Wilson became a F.R.S. in 1751 and published widely on electricity (*An Essay Towards and Explination of the Phenomena of Electricity Deduced from the Aether of Sir Isaac Newton* (1746), *A Treatise on Electricity* (1750), *Observations on a Series of Electrical Experiments* (1756)) In 1760 he received the Copley medal of the RS. (DSB, Vol.xiv, 1976, pp.418-419; Turner, Dictionary, Vol.33, 1996, p.217).

<sup>638</sup> A typescript copy of Wilson's *Memoirs* is deposited at the NPG. The quotations in this thesis are from Turner, 1967, here: p.108 (article: pp.105-112). See also DSB, Vol.xiv, 1976, p.419.

<sup>639</sup> Turner, 1967, p.108, quoting Wilson's *Memoirs* p.27.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid.

<sup>641</sup> Russell's portrait of Fanny Wilson in a blue dress and white veil, holding a shell in her left, her chin resting on her right (pastel, 1797, 35 ½ x 27 ½ in.), was for sale at Sotheby's, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1994, Lot.29.

<sup>642</sup> HOR, p.91. In his account on Wilson, Turner, 1967, p.109, mentions that Russell later on "did manage to produce a drawing of the moon, but it took him a period of eighteen years to complete the task using a reflector by William Herschel, and a refractor by Dollond."

“perhaps it was too hastily concluded that the large dark parts upon the Moon’s Face, were Seas”. Russell continued,

“I am apprehensive, that, if the Engraver has been faithful to his trust, this must have led that great Astronomer Cassini to represent these parts of one almost uniformly smooth, and unvaried effect, which upon a strict inspection will appear to be full of parts as various and nearly as multitudinous, as that portion of the Moon, which has generally been considered to be Land.”<sup>643</sup>

Russell believed that an improved quality of representations would encourage better theories about the surface of the moon. His *Lunar Planispheres* could be seen as such a practical attempt to improve lunar astronomy. Indeed, the text accompanying the two plates announces that the plates’ purpose was the exact determination of longitude.

“The principal use of the Moon to Astronomers is, that of ascertaining the longitude of places by the transit of the earth’s shadow, when the Moon is eclipsed. The shadow of the earth coming in contact with many known spots, if the observation be made in different places at the same time, the longitude of each place could by this means be ascertained with great precision. But the spots in the Full Moon have not their edges defined: and, for this reason, observations during Lunar Eclipses have not been so useful as could be wished. The Author of the Lunar Plates proposed to substitute the luminous points, so numerous and determined in the Full Moon, for observation, instead of the undefined spots just objected to. The first plate is chiefly directed to this end, and no pains have been spared to bring it to perfection.”<sup>644</sup>

This text, probably composed by Russell’s son William, is designed to make his father’s work more marketable. Indeed, John Russell himself may have thought of such a purpose for his work.<sup>645</sup> However, eclipses of the moon occur far too rarely to

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<sup>643</sup> HOR, p.92.

<sup>644</sup> Russell, 1809, p.[2].

<sup>645</sup> Howse, 1989, p.165.

be of any practical use for the determination of longitude.<sup>646</sup> By the late eighteenth century, longitude at sea could easily and reliably be obtained by using either Harrison's clock method or Maskelyne's lunar distance method.<sup>647</sup> Russell's friendship with Maskelyne invites speculation about the possibility of cooperation between the Astronomer Royal and the painter, or at least of a shared interest in longitude calculations. After all, Russell dedicated one of the plates of the *Lunar Planispheres* to Maskelyne. An argument against such a connection is the fact that the Astronomer Royal's lunar distance method was based on the changed position of the moon in relation to major stars. In this method, the measurements of the stars' apparent distances to the moon were taken from the rim of the lunar disc.<sup>648</sup> The surface features of the moon were of no significance for the calculation of lunar distance. An improved lunar globe or map would not therefore have been useful to Maskelyne. The final sentence of the *Lunar Planispheres* declares, "The labours of Mr. Russell are now before the public; and it is hoped they will not only prove of great utility to the Astronomer, but lead to very important speculations in Natural Philosophy."<sup>649</sup> Despite the intention, no such effects materialised.

The main reason for Russell's failure to inspire astronomy was the fact that, during the artist's lifetime, the majority of astronomers pointed their telescopes into deep space and the planets rather than at the Earth's well-known satellite. The hugely popular comet hunting of that era had led by chance to galactic astronomy. Herschel's discovery of Uranus in 1781 created a fashionable interest in the planets.<sup>650</sup> Another area of astronomical interest at the time was found in the rare transits of Venus across the solar disc in 1761 and 1768 for the determination of the solar parallax, which enabled further measurements of the universe.<sup>651</sup> The statement in Russell's *Lunar Planispheres* is surprising, considering that the predominant

<sup>646</sup> Ibid., 1980, p.94; Hoskin, 1997, pp.175-181.

<sup>647</sup> Howse, 1980, pp.6-8, 57-58, 194-197; Ibid., 1989, pp.92-96; Wilson, 2001, p.342. Harrison's method proved the more accurate and was therefore more successful than Maskelyne's.

<sup>648</sup> Howse, 1980, pp.6-8, 57-58, 194-197; Ibid., 1989, pp.92-96. The Lunar Distance method works by establishing the longitude through subtraction of local time from GMT. Local time would be calculated with the position of the sun (or other objects) in the sky, and GMT could be calculated by measuring the relative position of the moon from various reference stars, which were pre-calculated and published in an almanac in advance. Harrison's clock made the calculation of GMT superfluous, as it carried London time with it.

<sup>649</sup> Russell, 1809, p.[3].

<sup>650</sup> Herschel famously found a sixth planet, later known as Uranus, and in 1787, its two satellites, Oberon and Titania. In the 1800s the discovery of the Asteroids Ceres (1801), Pallas (1802), and Juno (1804) added to the picture of the solar system. Further studies on the Sun and its light were carried out. See for example Pannekoek, 1961, pp.311-320; Hoskin, 1997, pp.175-201; Lankford, 1997, pp.240-242.

<sup>651</sup> Hoskin, 1997, pp.ix, 182-191; Lankford, 1997, pp.240-241.

interests of contemporary astronomers did not include the moon. The solidarity which Russell received from many well-known astronomers might have convinced the artist of the viability of his work. Indeed, the *Lunar Planispheres* boast in self-advertisement, “It need only be said of this Work, that it is in the hands of the most eminent Astronomers of this and other kingdoms.”<sup>652</sup> Farington’s diary gives more private evidence for astronomers’ appreciation of Russell’s work. In 1796 he wrote,

“I went with Russell to his House [...] He shewed me his new invented globe of the Moon, with the Brass Apparatus for which He has obtained a Patent. – Dr. Herschell has examined it 2 Hours, and said Astronomers could not now do without it.”<sup>653</sup>

Sir Joseph Banks himself held two copies of the *Description of the Selenographia*. One of Russell’s globes, together with two pamphlets, was sent to the king’s library. This recognition must have flattered Russell. However, the compliments might have been meant as acknowledgements of the artist’s skill and perseverance rather than the usefulness of the apparatus and the images, and might have seduced him to unrealistic hopes.

Even if astronomers had been interested in the moon, it is unlikely that they would have found the *Lunar Planispheres* helpful. These engraved plates are not maps, because they entirely lack a grid and a legend, which had become standard in astronomical illustrations by the late eighteenth century.<sup>654</sup> The pastels share this absence of labels, and were even less useful for an astronomical application, because they only account for part of the visible lunar surface. The globes might be considered the most map-like object among Russell’s images. However, even these intricate machines, capable of displaying the librations and illustrating the lunar surface features in careful drawing, only display the lunar prime meridian and

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<sup>652</sup> Russell, 1809, p.[3].

<sup>653</sup> FD, Vol.3, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1796, p.695. William Herschel had a private interest in the moon and published his observations of lunar mountains. In 1787 he published on what he considered volcanic eruptions on the moon (Herschel, W.: ‘An Account of Three Volcanoes in the Moon’, in: *MNRAS*, vol.77, 1787, pp.229-232). This, however, remains a singular phenomenon and is not taken up by others. There exists a late eighteenth-century drawing of the moon by Herschel (see Brown, 1968, plate xiv). On the contemporary debate of life on the moon see also Dekker, 1999, p.126.

<sup>654</sup> Mayer had finished his moon map in 1750 without a grid, and thus it was similar to Russell’s *LP*. However, when Mayer’s map was published by J.P. Kaltenhofer some twenty-five years later, a grid had been introduced. (Herschel and Herzsprung, pp.64, 198-199; Whitaker, 1999, p.83).

equator, and lack a full grid.<sup>655</sup> In this light, the moon images can only be regarded as knick-knacks for the gentleman collector of curiosities. The globes, however, failed to have any noticeable impact even in this capacity.<sup>656</sup> Only about a dozen exemplars of Russell's apparatus appear to have been built, although it is impossible to establish the exact number.<sup>657</sup> When the artist painted portraits for Lord Exeter at Burghley, the eloquent Methodist persuaded his patron to buy a Selenographia. The globe was indeed delivered, but was still in its original packing when recently rediscovered.<sup>658</sup> Lord Exeter's purchase of the globe seems to have been an act of charity rather than one motivated by genuine interest.

Since Russell's depictions of the moon did not pass as astronomical images, they might, instead, be considered objects of art. During the artist's lifetime the moon frequently featured in painting and poetry as part of a moonlit landscape. Joseph Wright of Derby (fig.100) and Abraham Pether (1756-1812) (fig.65) dominated the nocturnal pastoral landscape genre in Georgian Britain. Henry Pether (fl. 1828-65) and Atkinson Grimshaw (1836-93) played a seminal role in the transformation of the Georgian pastoral genre into Victorian urban moonlights. All of these moonlit landscapes commonly depicted the moon as a circular disc which contained no realistic characterisation of the lunar surface features. Artists tended to use these simplified full moons as light sources and as compositional elements to enhance the atmospheric mood of their paintings. Only one drawing of such a conventional moonshine scene survives amongst Russell's sketches. It is an undated drawing which bears the inscription "Eaton" (fig.99).<sup>659</sup> This rough sketch depicts the river Thames, with Eton as a shady silhouette on the opposite side of the river. The foreground consists of the rudimentary representation of a jetty and a tree. The moon is visible in the sky, as well as another celestial object which might be a star or planet. In addition to this sketch, Russell finished at least one night painting, "St.

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<sup>655</sup> Dekker, 1999, pp.126, 485.

<sup>656</sup> Russell commented on historical moon globes in his *Description of the Selenographia* (Russell, 1797, p.2; Dekker, 1999, p.125; Gunther, 1923, pp.263-264).

<sup>657</sup> One Selenographia globe exist at the MHS in Oxford, three exemplars are at the SciM, one is at the BL, one at RAS, one at the NMM, one at BMAG, and one at the Observatorio Astronomico Nacional, Madrid. Further copies are held in private collections one globe respectively at Petworth House, at the Royal Library Windsor Castle, and at Burghley House (Dekker, 1999, p.486).

<sup>658</sup> *Gentleman Collector*, 1986, no.26.

<sup>659</sup> RSB A, pp.30-31. The depicted celestial object cannot be the sun because the star, which is drawn towards the right side, and which is lower in the horizon than the larger object in the sky, could not be visible unless the larger object was the moon. Also the shadows of the silhouette suggest a night setting.

Catherine's Hill by Moonlight", which is listed in the catalogue of the Royal Academy's annual exhibition from 1790, but which remains untraced.<sup>660</sup> St. Catherine's Hill features repeatedly in Russell's sketchbooks, although all surviving studies feature daytime settings.<sup>661</sup> The loss of this image, and the absence of any copies, prevent the comparison of Russell's moonshine landscape with Wright's or Pether's paintings, or with Russell's own moon pastels. Such a comparison would have been interesting because Russell exhibited "St. Catherine's Hill by Moonlight" at the time when he was pursuing his astronomical observations most actively.

Russell's surviving lunar images, with the sole exception of the Eton sketch, were not moonlit landscapes but depicted the moon in a way that did not fit any established category of art. The meticulous preparation, and the artist's determination to reach the highest degree of accuracy in his understanding of the lunar surface features, distinguish Russell's lunar images. The moon was commonly used in painting as a significant compositional detail, but painters invested little time in its depiction. A rare exception to the traditional full moon is Francis Swaine's (fl.1761-82) "The Capture of the Foudroyant by HMS Monmouth, 28 February 1758" (c.1761), at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (fig.98). The painter rendered the scene as it would have looked in reality, not merely with respect to the ships, but also to the shape and position of the moon in the night sky. Swaine depicted the scene at around half past midnight, at which time a waning gibbous moon was visible at the depicted altitude over the battle scene.<sup>662</sup> This unusually realistic detail tellingly disappeared when Swaine's motif was adopted for an enamelled decoration for a pocket watch two decades later, where a standardised, full lunar disc features.<sup>663</sup> While Swaine's painting is a rare exception, Russell's lunar pastels do not even fit this category of realistic moonshine landscape. Instead of employing the moon as a part of a landscape composition, Russell painted the object of his study and devotion in the featureless emptiness of space. He took the moon out of its context and, uniquely, made it the actual subject of his painting. This meant that he employed astronomical as well as artistic methods. The resulting images belong to both art and natural philosophy, or, as a lack of interest from

<sup>660</sup> See Appendix 2, p.201. The image is listed under no.418.

<sup>661</sup> For sketches of St. Catherine's Chapel see RSB G (dated 1785) pp.44-45 and RSB D (dated 1787), pp.6-7, 8-9, 24-25.

<sup>662</sup> Allen, 1883, pp.187-189. For the determination of the phase and position of the moon in the night sky see *Starry Night*, for Cabo de Gata, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1758.

<sup>663</sup> The watch (1781) is by Thomas Mudge and William Dutton, London, now Greenwich Observatory (Cordigly, 1974, p.85).



researchers and indeed contemporaries indicates, they belong to neither.<sup>664</sup> The next part of this chapter analyses the only context in which Russell's fixation with accuracy and the illusion of reality makes sense, by looking at the moon images in their capacity as icons of Natural Theology.

### **The Enlightening Moon: Lunar Portraiture as Natural Theology**

In his *Christian Philosophy* in the *Evangelical Magazine*, Russell, alias Conspector, gives a well-informed summary of late eighteenth-century knowledge about the Moon.<sup>665</sup> Subsequently, he presents a religiously charged reflection on the Earth's satellite as a metaphorical mirror.

“The moon is an opaque body, having no light of her own, but reflecting that of the sun; - a lively emblem of the church, illuminated indeed, and illuminating others, but only by reflecting the rays of Jesus, the ‘Sun of Righteousness’.”<sup>666</sup>

The term “Sun of righteousness” is common in Evangelical writing, featuring for example, in Hervey's *Contemplations on the Night*. Hervey asks, “Is not this an expressive emblem of the loveliness which the Sun of righteousness transfuses into all that is amiable?”<sup>667</sup> The *Evangelical Magazine* continues to discuss the light metaphor.

“How extensive is the divine goodness in the beneficial rays of the Sun, which visit alike the just and the unjust, the saint and the sinner! How cogent an argument this to induce disciples of Jesus to love their enemies! Let us resemble our heavenly Father by diffusing, as widely as possible, the benefits of that knowledge which we receive from the great Fountain of Intelligence.”<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>664</sup> Ryan, 1966, considered Russell's astronomical work entirely separately from religion or indeed the artist's main work. Olson and Pasachoff, 2001, pp.304, 326-329, recognised this combination.

<sup>665</sup> “Mr. Ferguson” is the source of the moon facts (*EM* 1794, Vol.2, p.66).

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67.

<sup>667</sup> Hervey, 1769, p.29.

<sup>668</sup> *EM*, “The Sun”, 1793, September issue, p.118.

Russell regarded moon and sun alike as potent metaphors for Christian behaviour, because one or other of them was often present to remind the sinner of the ideal he should strive for. Some twenty-five years previously to the *Christian Philosophy*, Hervey was very explicit on the Christian's imitation of the moon.

“O! thou queen of the shades! may it be my ambition to follow this thy instructive example! While others are fond to transcribe the fashions of little courts, and to mimic personages of inferior state, be it mine to imitate thy *improving purity*! May my conduct become more unblemished, and my temper more refined, as I proceed farther and farther in my probationary course! May every sordid desire wear away, and every irregular appetite be gradually lost, as I make nearer approaches to the celestial mansions!”<sup>669</sup>

In accordance with the Methodist fondness for this kind of metaphor, and mirroring its use in the *Evangelical Magazine*, Russell made extensive use of this light and dark symbolism in his diary. When he was feeling bad he wrote, “I have been in darkness from a sense of falling into the sad abuse of things harmful.”<sup>670</sup> When his circumstances bettered he recorded that he “walked in the Light of the Lord”<sup>671</sup> or that he “found at times [...] sweet returns of the Shines of the Sun of Righteousness.”<sup>672</sup> After hearing Rowland Hill preach in 1773, Russell noted that he had received “from the Lord a small gleam of lovely light that gives me encouragement tho in the dark to wait.”<sup>673</sup> Five years later he recorded that he was uncomfortable, but not without a “few heavenly sun gleams”.<sup>674</sup> The theme reappears throughout the artist's life, and in 1801 Russell still recorded having “experienced more bright beams [...] shining from the sun of righteousness”.<sup>675</sup>

From the multitude of objects in the natural world that Evangelicals considered worthy of intensive reflection, Russell chose the moon. One of the most impressive and difficult objects to observe, this choice appears to have been influenced by the many astronomers who were among the artist's portraiture

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<sup>669</sup> Hervey, 1769, p.62.

<sup>670</sup> RD, Vol.5, p.94, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1772.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., p.99, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1772.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., p.100, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1772.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., p.144, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1773.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., Vol.6, p.85, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1778.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., p.4, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1801.

clientele.<sup>676</sup> At the same time, Russell's moon paintings were very likely an illustration of the light metaphor which was so meaningful to the Revival and to the artist himself. As Conspector he wrote in the *Evangelical Magazine*,

“Who can behold the spangled arch of heaven without being *charmed* and *awed*? Surely the stars *teach* as well as *shine*; and viewing them, not merely as glittering lamps, but as suns and worlds, the mind is filled with unspeakable solemnity. O what a great God! *Praise him, sun and moon; Praise him, all ye stars of light*. When my devotion expires amidst the vanities of life, let me review the stars, and kindle it again at those heavenly fires.”<sup>677</sup>

This episode echoes Russell's early diary entry, where he reflected on the powerful effect, which “a sight of the Stars” had on him, because he believed that “God was pleas'd to preach” to him through the night sky.<sup>678</sup> This recognition of the Creator in the night sky, which strengthened his faith, seems the most likely explanation for the artist's strong devotion to the subject.

That Russell's worship, inspired by the contemplation of the night sky, was not exceptional, is apparent in the many literary sources on the subject. One of the hymns, which was sung in the Countess of Huntingdon's circle, echoes Russell's feelings when looking at the night sky.

“When I travail in Distress  
Or Grief of any kind,  
Burden'd with Uneasiness,  
And Anguish on my Mind;  
One sweet Ray of heavenly Light,  
Breaks up to Day the gloomy Night,  
And quite renews the Scene.

My Complaints with Speed remove,  
My Sorrows turn to Joy,

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<sup>676</sup> See p.136.

<sup>677</sup> *EM*, Vol.2, 1794, p.245.

<sup>678</sup> See pp.57, 132.

Songs of Melody and Love,  
Again my Tongue employ;  
Then I enter into Rest,  
Again I call IMMANUEL mine;  
And like *John*, upon his Breast,  
My weary head recline.”<sup>679</sup>

The Rev. John Ryland, in his *Contemplations on the Beauties of Creation* (1778), explained why the moon was particularly well suited to tell humankind of the Creator. He wrote that if one reflected on nature with reason, one would necessarily arrive at the conclusion that God was the primary cause behind the existence of the moon. After admiring the fact that the moon, as a secondary planet, obeyed the same laws that ruled the primary planet, the Earth, Ryland praised moons in general for their suitability “to their use and office”.<sup>680</sup> He further wrote, “How various the ends of our moon, to agitate the watry world; and to produce the most wonderful and useful motions, the flux and reflux of the seas, called the tides; with a thousand various uses beside!”<sup>681</sup> Hervey too, dwelt extensively upon the usefulness of the moon to humankind. He reasoned,

“The moon, philosophy says, is a sort of *sovereign* over the *great deep*. Her orb, like a royal sceptre, sways the ocean, and actuates the fluid realms. It swells the tides, and perpetuates the reciprocal returns of ebb and flow. By which means the liquid element purges off its filth, and is preserved from being putrefied itself, and from poisoning the world.”<sup>682</sup>

Early in the eighteenth century Joseph Addison (1672-1719) anticipated Darwin’s account of Creation<sup>683</sup> and celebrated the declaration of God’s presence in the spheres.

“The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,

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<sup>679</sup> Anon., 1773, Hymn 7, pp.7-8.

<sup>680</sup> Ryland, Vol.1, 1780, p.9.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> Hervey, 1769, p.74.

<sup>683</sup> See p.53.

Their great Original proclaim:  
Th'unwearied Sun, from day to day,  
Does his Creator's powers display;  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The Moon takes up the wond'rous tale;  
And nightly, to the list'ning Earth  
Repeats the story of her birth:  
whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though, in solemn silence, all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
What though no real voice, nor sound  
Amid the radiant orbs be found?  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice;  
For ever singing as they shine:  
"The hand that made us is divine."<sup>684</sup>

The moon was widely celebrated as the Creator of the tides and the illuminator of the night. Hervey commented on the moonlit night, "How apparently has the divine wisdom interested itself, in providing even for the *pleasurable accommodation* of man!"<sup>685</sup>

A final example of the popular religious reflection on the moon in literature is Andrew Baxter's *Matho: or The Cosmotheoria Puerilis* (1738). Baxter advertised his bestseller as being useful for "the advancement and defence of true religion [...] by fixing its principles on an invariable and sure foundation, the divine attributes, as clearly displayed in the works of nature".<sup>686</sup> The teacher Philo and his pupil Matho,

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<sup>684</sup> Joseph Addison: "The Spacious Firmament on High" (*Spectator*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1712, quoted in Russell, 1985, p.54). Thanks to Peter Forsaith for pointing out this connection.

<sup>685</sup> Hervey, 1769, p.65.

<sup>686</sup> Baxter, 1765, introductory advertisement.

in their dialogues on astronomy, first discuss the sun. Philo inquires whether his pupil would be able to tell him why the sun was necessary to the planetary system. He asks, “Why might it not have been a dark, a torpid, and a motionless abyss?”<sup>687</sup> Matho answers, “Every body will own that the system required a sun, regular motions, and the present contrivances, because it was to be inhabited.”<sup>688</sup> The teacher then asks his pupil about the purpose of moonlight on the Earth. Matho answers, “The moon illuminates the darkened part of the earth in the sun’s absence; she directs the traveller in his way, and the fearing man in his course by night”.<sup>689</sup> The general assumption in texts by Addison, Baxter, the Countess of Huntingdon, Hervey, and Russell/Conspensor, was, that the moon did not exist by chance, but that it was put in place with a purpose.

The light-in-the-dark theme, so frequently discussed in various forms of literature, also featured in painting. This is illustrated, for example, in Wright of Derby’s painting “Lady from Milton’s Comus” (1785) (fig.100). In Milton’s pastoral drama the heroine loses her way in the woods and is pursued by the bacchanalian God Comus. Wright depicted her in the darkness of her solitary despair, where only nature provided comfort in the form of the moon. Wright exhibited his painting together with these lines from Milton’s drama.

“Was I deceiv’d, or did a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?  
I did not err, there does a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
And cast a gleam over this tufted grove.”<sup>690</sup>

The moon’s literal light in the darkness heralds the positive outcome of the dangerous situation and the rescue of the heroine’s chastity.<sup>691</sup>

While the “Lady from Milton’s Comus” focuses on the effect of nature on a human as its central theme, Wright of Derby created more intricate metaphors for Natural Theology in his famous painting “A Philosopher Giving a Lecture on an

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<sup>687</sup> Ibid., Vol.2, p.70.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>690</sup> Milton: *A mask presented at Ludlow Castle 1634; on Michaelmasse Night*, generally called *Comus*, quoted in Egerton, 1990, p.127.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., pp.127-128.

Orrery in which a Lamp is put in place of the Sun” (1766) (fig.101). The orrery was a popular piece of equipment in public lectures on astronomy. The audience could learn about celestial mechanics, and reflect on their place in God’s providential plan.<sup>692</sup> The above-mentioned writings by Ryland, Gerard, Darwin, Addison, and others, exemplify the widespread idea that stars, planets, and moons proved the existence of their Creator.<sup>693</sup> This is certainly one of the dimensions of Wright’s painting. Wright skilfully placed his sitters in a way that allows their faces to be illuminated to different degrees. This elaborate illumination invites comparison with the lunar phases, from the lecturer and the children, who represent the full moon, to those members of the audience who stand at the sides and whose illumination resembles that of the crescent and gibbous moons. The front figure, who stands entirely in shadow, represents the new moon.<sup>694</sup> This application of a natural phenomenon to society, as represented by the orrery audience, could be regarded as an attempt to illustrate the connection between the divinely inspired natural laws and the harmony of human society. Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) puts it thus,

“The universal Benevolence towards all Men we may compare to that principle of Gravitation, which perhaps extends to all Bodys in the Universe; but increases as the Distance is diminish’d, and is strongest when Bodys come to touch each other...And the Attraction or Force by which the Parts of each Body cohere, may represent the Self-Love of each Individual.”<sup>695</sup>

If gravity in the Newtonian Macrocosm could be seen as linked to social sympathy, this image can therefore be seen as a multilayered metaphor of the belief of the Creator’s visibility in the laws of nature and society. Using light as a metaphor, Wright depicted humankind’s dawning realisation of these connections. Jordanova demonstrated that knowledge, vision, and light were the dominant metaphors for

<sup>692</sup> Solkin, 1993, p.233; Inkster, 1982, pp.119-123.

<sup>693</sup> “When the mundane system is justly explained, it appears to be adjusted with the utmost regularity and proportion; the sense of which at once confirms the theory, and fills us with admiration of the supreme wisdom.” Alexander Gerard: *An Essay on Taste* (London, 1759) pp.187, 190-191, quoted in Solkin, 1993, p.232.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid., p.233, points out that the moon phase motive in “The Orrery” was first recognised by Albert Boime: *Art in the Age of Revolution 1750-1800: A Social History of Modern Art*, Vol.1, 1987, p.237.

<sup>695</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London, 1728) pp.221-222, quoted in Solkin, 1993, p.232.

both progress in the natural philosophies as well as for religious “illumination”.<sup>696</sup> Light, and moonlight in particular, commonly feature in association with knowledge. Hervey, for example, quoted Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts* on moonlight.

“Night is fair Virtue’s immemorial friend:  
The conscious Moon, through every distant age,  
Has held a lamp to Wisdom.”<sup>697</sup>

Hervey maintained that God spoke to humankind through the moon. The poet addresses the moon with the words, “you are [...] So beautiful in thyself, so beneficial in thy effect”. He states that God spoke through the moon “face to face” to mankind, and that He, “as a man speaketh unto his friend, [...] might dispel our intellectual darkness.”<sup>698</sup> Russell’s moon images work on the same principles as Wright’s “Orrery”, although the pastel painter approached the topic from an unusual angle. Wright depicted a model universe as a metaphor for the divine harmony of natural laws. He further guided the viewer through the awesome subject by depicting an audience in the process of being enlightened. In contrast, Russell’s deserted, sterile moon *is* the divinely created object. His pastels show the moon as an object “suspended in a void”<sup>699</sup> and offer no explanation to the viewer. What Wright had clad in a popular metaphor, Russell encrypted in such a literal form that few people recognised the dimension of religious reflection inherent in the moon pastels. Nevertheless, both Wright’s “Orrery” and Russell’s moon pastels illustrate both painters’ belief that God was inherent in nature, that the empirical understanding of nature opened the observers’ eyes to the divine harmony which interconnected every part of the world, and that this understanding would inspire mankind’s devotion for the divine Creator.

Russell could not have created his works without this chain of empirical understanding, recognition of beauty, and devotion. He brought this philosophy onto the canvas by regarding astronomy and art as two closely connected tools. Martin

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<sup>696</sup> Jordanova, 1985, p.396.

<sup>697</sup> Hervey, 1769, p.ix.

<sup>698</sup> Hervey’s *Descant on Creation*, 1769, p.186.

<sup>699</sup> *Like the face of the Moon*, 1991, p.14.



Kemp has pointed out that, historians have traditionally applied the modern division of art and science to previous centuries.

“Education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has tended to stress the factors that differentiate science and art as separate fields of human endeavour, emphasising the dispassionate objectivity of scientific method and the anarchic imaginative freedom of artistic creativity.”<sup>700</sup>

Indeed, Russell’s idea of the beauty of natural laws has also been discussed by twentieth-century astronomers. Amongst these Subramanian Chandrasekhar (1910-95) has discussed the beauty of mathematics. In his view, a scientist could “feel” that a formula was true, although he might not be able to prove it, simply because it was beautiful.<sup>701</sup> Russell also valued intuition, declaring to Hornsby that he wanted to “produce a Drawing in some measure corresponding to the Feelings I had upon the first sight of the gibbous Moon through a Telescope.”<sup>702</sup> The investigation of John Russell’s work makes it clear that a categorical separation of art and natural philosophy would be misleading.

The fusion of empirical fact with artistic idealisation, which is the basis of Russell’s moon images, was also central to his portraits. The basis of his portraiture was a sound understanding of anatomy, but the actual art was the improvement of the observed particularities through idealisation. The elongation of a short neck might not be truthful to the empirical fact, but, Russell argued, beautification was the only way of exciting the viewers’ interest and admiration.<sup>703</sup> The same rules apply to the moon images. After Russell observed the moon carefully, he presented it in a way that would create not the most accurate, but the most effective image.

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<sup>700</sup> Kemp wrote the entry on “Science and Art” in Turner’s *Dictionary of Art*, Vol.28, pp.199-208, quote from p.200. Stafford, 1994, p.xxv, writes “We need [...] to get beyond the artificial dichotomy presently entrenched in our society between higher cognitive function and the supposedly merely physical manufacture of ‘pretty picture’.”

<sup>701</sup> Chandrasekhar recalls the story of Weyl, who defended his gauge theory of gravitation, although he could not prove it, because “it was so beautiful that he did not wish to abandon it and so he kept it alive for the sake of its beauty. But much later, it did turn out that Weyl’s instinct was right after all, when the formalism of gauge invariance was incorporated into quantum electrodynamics.” Chandrasekhar, 1987, pp.65-66. Kemp, in Turner’s Dictionary, vol.28, p.208, commented, that the “language used by scientists about the solutions to a problem – ‘beautiful’, ‘elegant’ and so on – suggests that there are shared motivations in our need to pursue the arts and sciences.”

<sup>702</sup> HOR, p.91.

<sup>703</sup> See Chapter 4, p.123.

When he wrote about his first viewings of the moon, he noticed that the effect of the full moon was less startling than that of a gibbous because of the lack of dramatic shadowing.

“It was my intention first to produce a representation of the Full-Moon as it is generally illuminated by the Sun, but several very respectable Astronomers favord me with their opinion, and by their approbation of one of my Crayon Drawings, which describes the Moon two days after the first quarter, very easily prevaild upon me to alter my resolution and prefer this in which the boldness and the expressive elevations of Plato, Copernicus, Tycho, and some others near the Boundary of the Line of illumination, convey so distinct an Idea of these parts opposed to those situated near the centre of the Moon which very faintly express their character, compared to the former, as they are nearly lost in the general Blaze of Light.”<sup>704</sup>

“Effect” was so important to Russell that his lunar pastels, when seen from the distance, indeed give unsurpassed illusions of the real moon. However, on approaching the images closely, the viewer notices that the craters are rendered roughly and the mares contain very few features, far fewer than the artist recorded in his observational sketches. Russell presumably used this abstraction in order to recreate the way in which an observer would perceive the moon with the naked eye, with very few details. The painted moon bore a strong resemblance to the real object but it was slightly retouched, in the same way that Russell had smoothed out some of the less advantageous aspects in his portraits. Russell did not consider this idealisation to compromise truth, because the result of the merging of the empirical facts with the aesthetic requirements of art was beauty. Although keenly interested in understanding the way the Creator had made the world, Russell saw himself, more than anything, commissioned to display the beauty inherent in Creation, because that was the window through which he could communicate religion.

In one of his astronomical sketches, Russell drew the full moon “by means of a common erect eye tube to shew the cause in point of colour of the spots which

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<sup>704</sup> HOR, p.92. Russell mentioned his plan to return to the original idea of a full moon illustration. He realised it in *LP*. However, even here he addressed the problem of the lack of visibility on the full moon by inventing an “artificial light” version.

convey the idea of an human Face which this will exhibit when held at a little distance from the eye of the spectator.”<sup>705</sup> In a number of intriguing sketches of lunar features the artist took this anthropomorphism even further. When observed at sunrise, the Heraclide’s Promontory in the Sinus Iridum region has repeatedly been associated with the head of a woman. This effect, which is visible in photographs (fig.102), is known as the “moon maiden”, and is already marked by Cassini in his moon map of 1679.<sup>706</sup> The earliest surviving sketch in which Russell depicted the promontory with humanoid features dates from 1787.<sup>707</sup> In the following year Russell made at least three more sketches of the “maiden”.<sup>708</sup> The second of these images is the most noteworthy because it is a finished drawing (fig.103).<sup>709</sup> With its high degree of finish, this fantastical drawing is distinct from the smaller, more fragmentary, and scientifically minded crater sketches.<sup>710</sup> The “maiden” featured again in the sketches of 1789. While these studies still contain humanoid features, they become smaller, and the “maiden” increasingly merges with the craters.<sup>711</sup> The “moon maiden” sketches illustrate the mingling of fantasy and rational observation, which underlies Russell’s moon images. On this subject, Ryland wrote of the “harmonious [solar] system, adorned with beauty to excite our love; replete with novelty to excite curiosity; and full of grandeur to rouse admiration into the most pleasing astonishment and ardent devotion.”<sup>712</sup> In his article on the Radcliffe Observatory in Oxford, Christopher Hussey considers Russell’s large pastel drawing of the Moon “probably the most beautiful astronomical drawing ever made.”<sup>713</sup> Russell himself called the moon a “beautiful object” and pastel painting “a beautiful

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<sup>705</sup> ALBUM, no.2, undated.

<sup>706</sup> Thanks to Kevin Johnson and Peter Hingley for sharing their information on the moon maiden. Francoise Launay, from the Observatoire Paris, wrote the following. “As far as the ‘Moon maiden’ is concerned, I had a feeling that she might be Madame Cassini, nee Genevieve de Laistre (1643-1708), because of the dragonfly wings above her head and because of the heart on the map. This hypothesis is now reinforced by the fact that Jean Dominique commissioned a pen-and-ink portrait of his wife in 1678. The name of the artist was ... Jean Baptiste Patigny, the son of the artist and engraver of the map of the moon [Jean Patigny].” (Launay, 2003, p.1.7).

<sup>707</sup> ALBUM, no.37.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid., numbers 44, 65, 70.

<sup>709</sup> Ryan, 1966, p.33, pointed out that it was in this drawing that the maiden had fully emerged. This is the closest Russell ever gets to Cassini’s moon maiden.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid., p.75; ALBUM, numbers 91, 92, 116. By the time Russell worked on no. 130 (1792), he treated the “woman” like any other lunar feature and covers the Heraklides Promontory in triangulation measurements.

<sup>712</sup> Ryland, Vol.3, p.305.

<sup>713</sup> Hussey, 1930, p.680.

art”.<sup>714</sup> All this beauty was, to Russell, an expression of the harmony which derived from the fact that God had made every last bit of it.

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<sup>714</sup> See Chapter 1, p.19 (FN40), and Chapter 5, p.135 (FN596).

# 6

Conclusion:

This Two-fold Capacity

“a pious man, and a great astronomer,  
but in manner and appearance  
a complete artist”

(Kirke White on Russell,  
Williamson, 1894, p.83)

The focal point of John Russell's life and work was religion. A record from one of the artist's numerous travels illustrates how he spontaneously found time and space for his religion. Russell wrote that he

“found comfortable breathings to Christ in the fields, being alone in Ld. Erlesford's Garden and unwilling to loose my afternoon prayer I went into a cave that is dug into an hill about 230 paces, there is no light but at the entrance and nobody could hear me, I lift up my soul to the Lord in prayer and singing. the Solemnity of the place struck my passions and lended to make my prayer more fervent the mouth of the cave from the distance appeared small as the flame of a candle. I found God could hear prayer even from that place.”<sup>715</sup>

Russell's life was full of devotion and this worship surfaced in his oeuvre. He painted the moon as an emblem of the Church. The young boy, whom he depicted eye to eye with a dog, learned Christian morality from his animal companion. Russell's gleeful children are happy in their own relative innocence and under the divinely instated, tender authority of their parents. The artist developed his images of the poor to incite benevolence and compassion. Russell sketched and admired landscapes as expressions of God's presence, and the same is true for his anatomical and astronomical drawings. Though the painter's works are diverse, they all contain evidence of Russell's belief, that the divine Creator could be traced in the material world.

Though quietly and often unnoticed, Russell's art attempts to inspire worship. The artist preached through the idealised representation of empirically observed nature. Russell's devotional interest in natural philosophy was considered blasphemous by Blake. When Thornton stated that the Creator and His Creation could be better appreciated, if better telescopes were available, Blake rejected this as an attempt to turn “God into the Goddess Nature”.<sup>716</sup> Blake, as Geoffrey Grigson put it, “was not fond of nature worshippers”.<sup>717</sup> Russell would have been on Thornton's side. To him, and to many of his Evangelical friends and acquaintances, the intricate marvels of nature were the clearest and most wonderful expression of God's

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<sup>715</sup> RD, Vol.2, p.107, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1768.

<sup>716</sup> Grigson, 1972, p.7.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid. Towards the end of his life, Blake annotated a copy of Thornton's final publication, his *New Translation of the Lord's Prayer* (1827).

presence. The poet Kirke White (1785-1806) commented on Russell as “a pious man, and a great astronomer, but in manner and appearance a complete artist”.<sup>718</sup> This shows that the painter could still live a manifold capacity, just as Peckwell and Hey could be active in the spreading of their religion at the same time as working in the medical profession.

This dual approach of combining different skills and interests in one biography disappeared with Russell’s generation. The pastel painter’s son, William Russell, a Methodist as convinced as his father, had a different attitude. A promising painter, he exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1805 until 1809, when he swore an oath not to touch brush and palette again because he feared that painting might interfere with his religious duties.<sup>719</sup> John Russell was still very much an eighteenth-century man, who saw no contradiction in the combination of his interests, and who lived a god-fearing life as a painter. His son, who went on to become Rector of Shepperton, could not reconcile what he considered indecision between half-hearted activities with his Methodist conscience. A similar change from one generation to the next occurred in the Bacon family. John Bacon’s son, John Bacon the younger (1777-1859), became a sculptor like his father. Holding “pronounced evangelical views” he retired early from his artistic career in order to devote himself to the Bible.<sup>720</sup> The change is one from a late eighteenth-century combination of interests towards the increasing specialisation of the nineteenth century, by which time it no longer seemed possible to combine interests in the way it had been for the elder Russell and Bacon. While John Russell regarded it as a temptation and against the service of God to become a preacher himself, the latter approach seems to have been the only truly god-fearing option for his son. Accordingly, William Russell decided in favour of the ministry some four decades after his father had opted for painting. These different decisions made by fathers and their sons illustrate the great change which took place in the way religion was interpreted. But it was not only the Victorians who rejected the mingled approach of earlier generations. This change in religious practice has also been misunderstood by art historians who, until now, did not connect Russell’s art with his religion. However, after considering his complex

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<sup>718</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.83.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>720</sup> Bacon, 1907, p.21; Saunders, 1961, p.28.

philosophy, it is clear that Russell's main motivation was religion, that, indeed, he was a religious artist, who worked in a two-fold capacity.



## Illustrations



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# THE SQUINTING EYE

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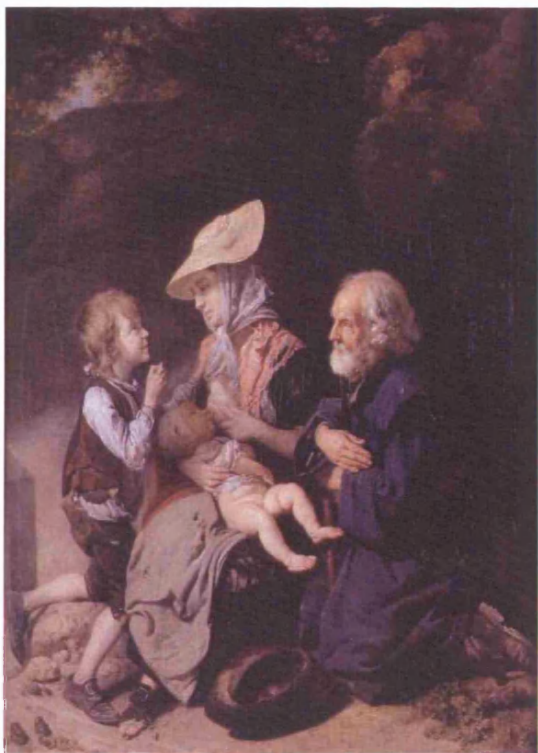




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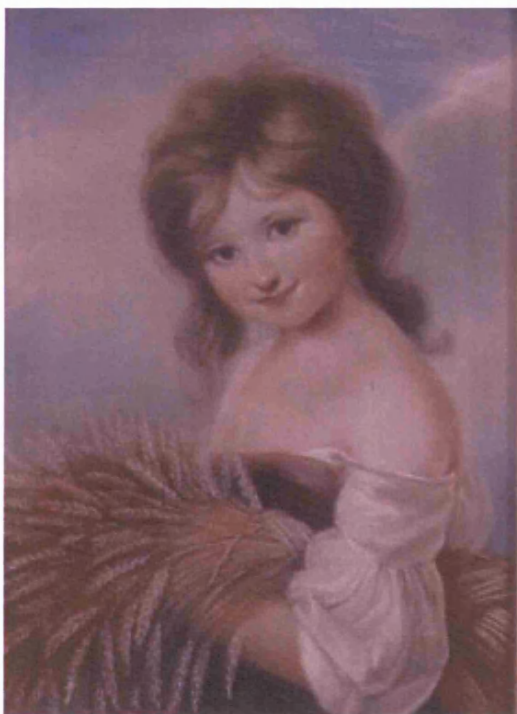
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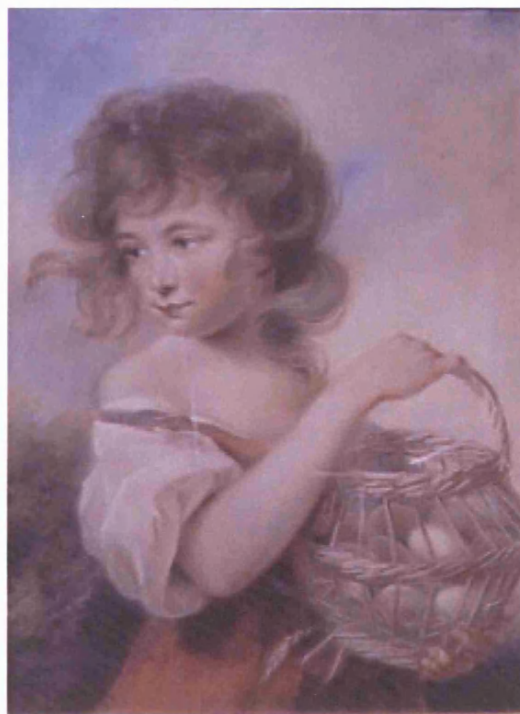
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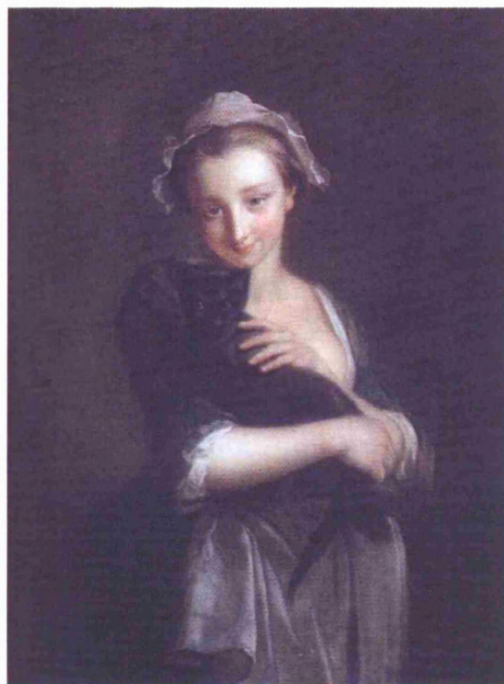


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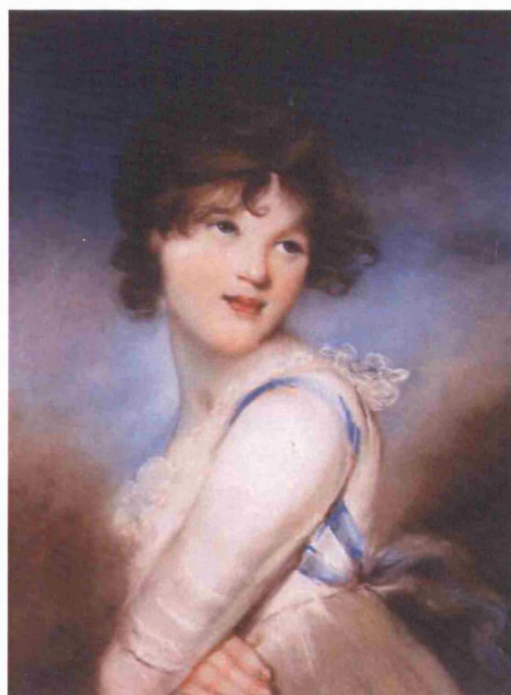
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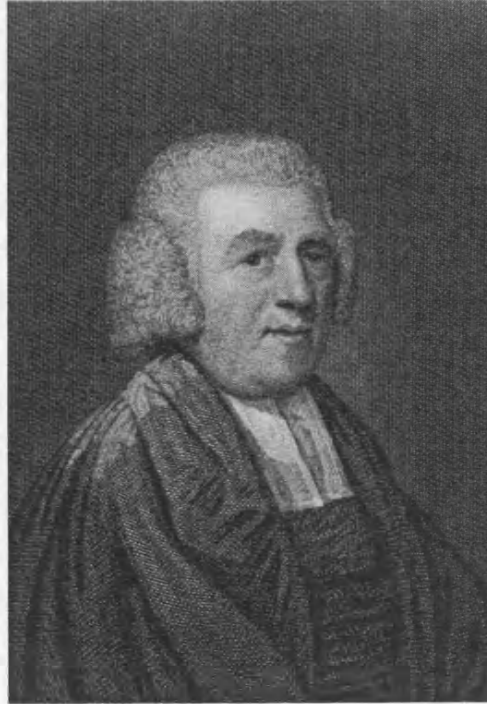


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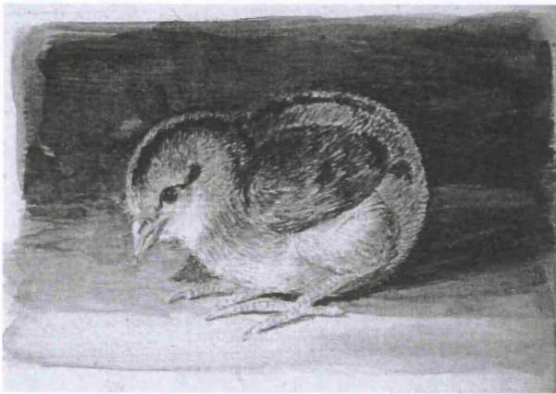
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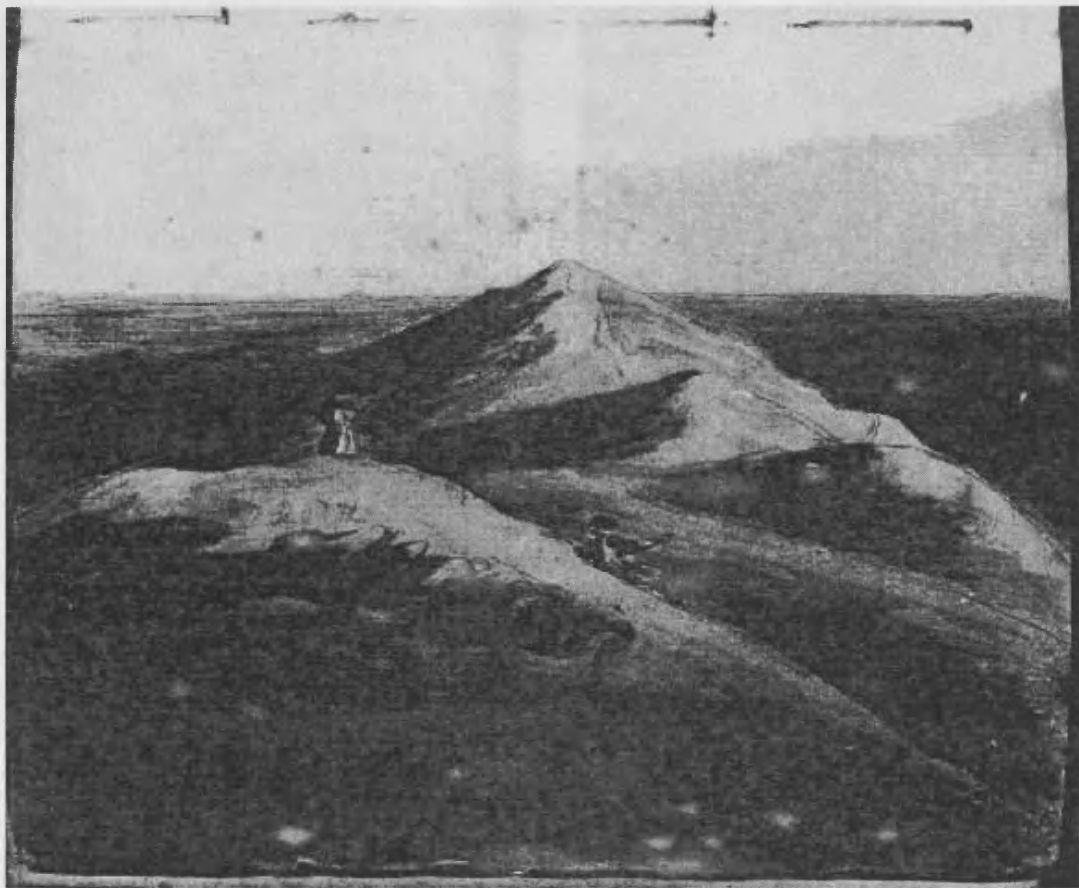
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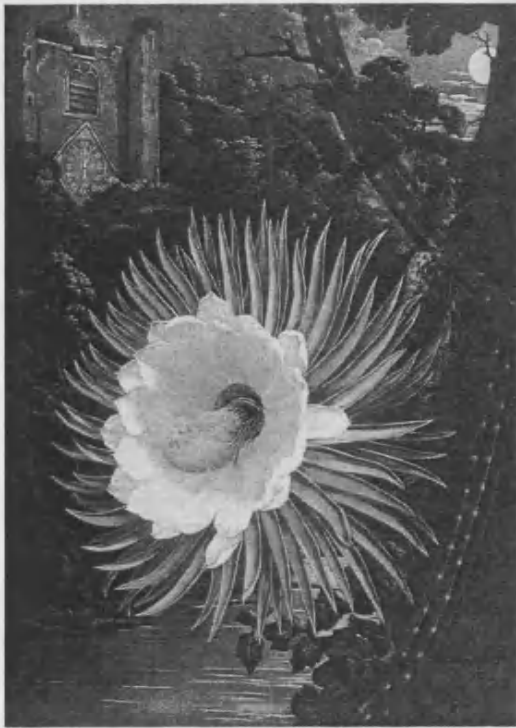
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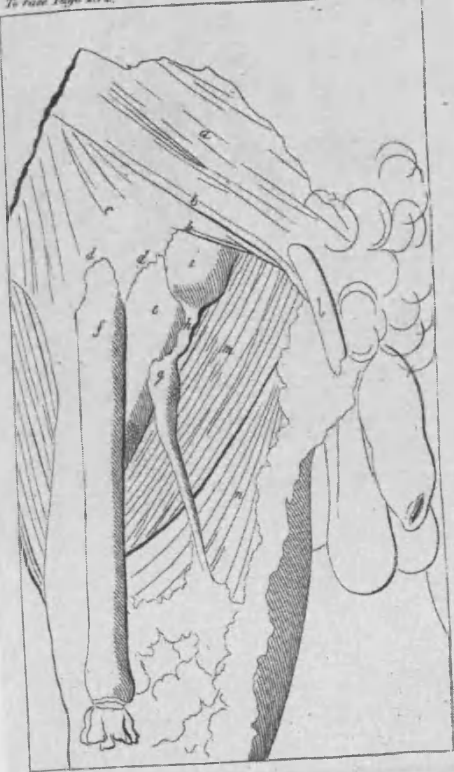


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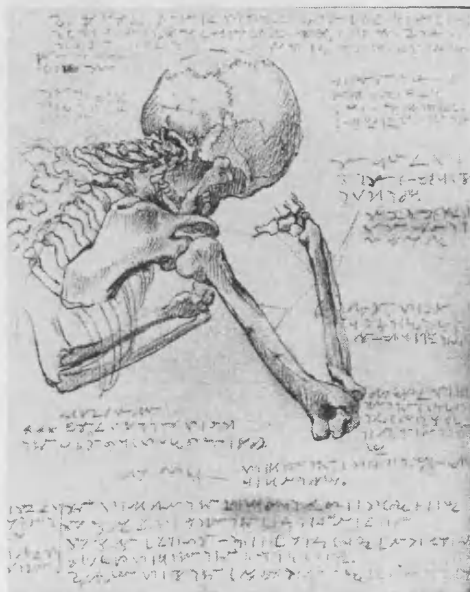
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PL. 5.



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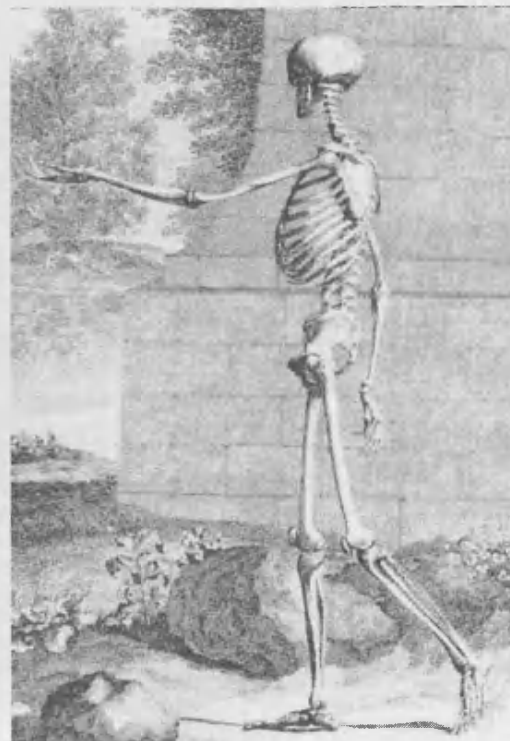
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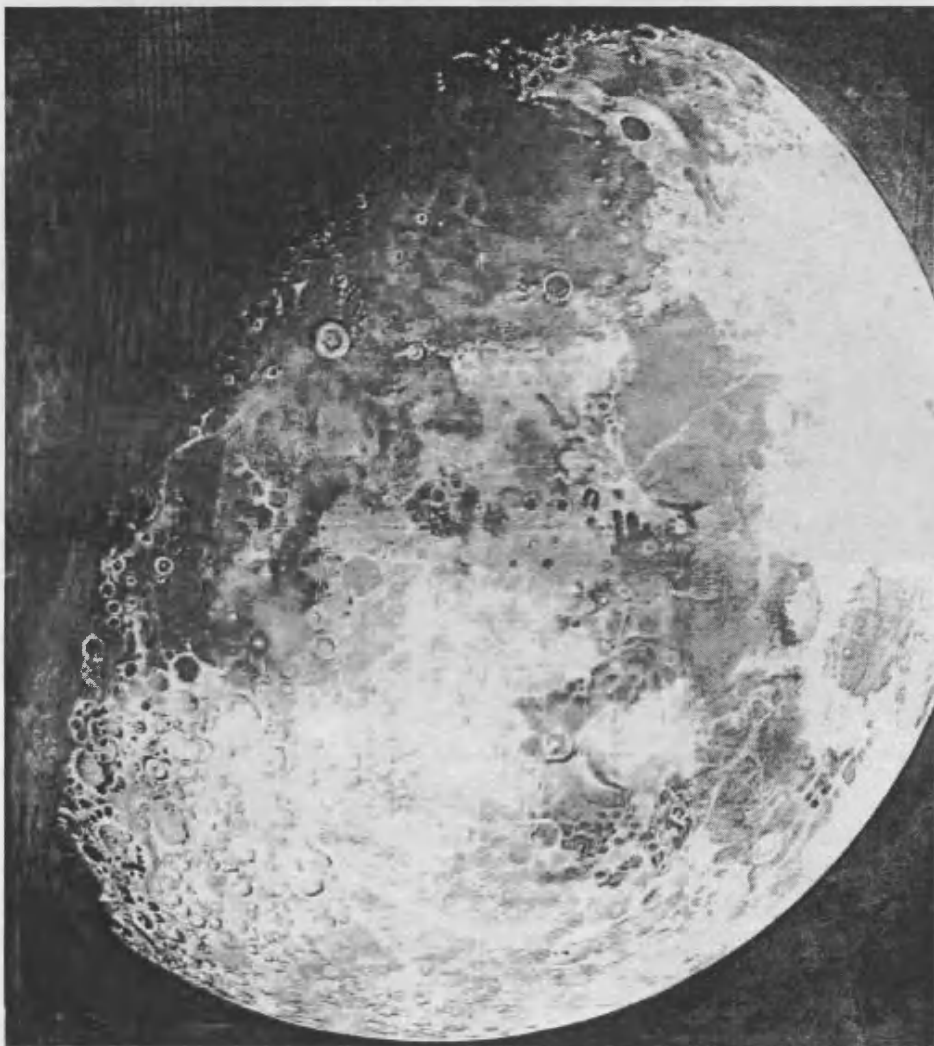




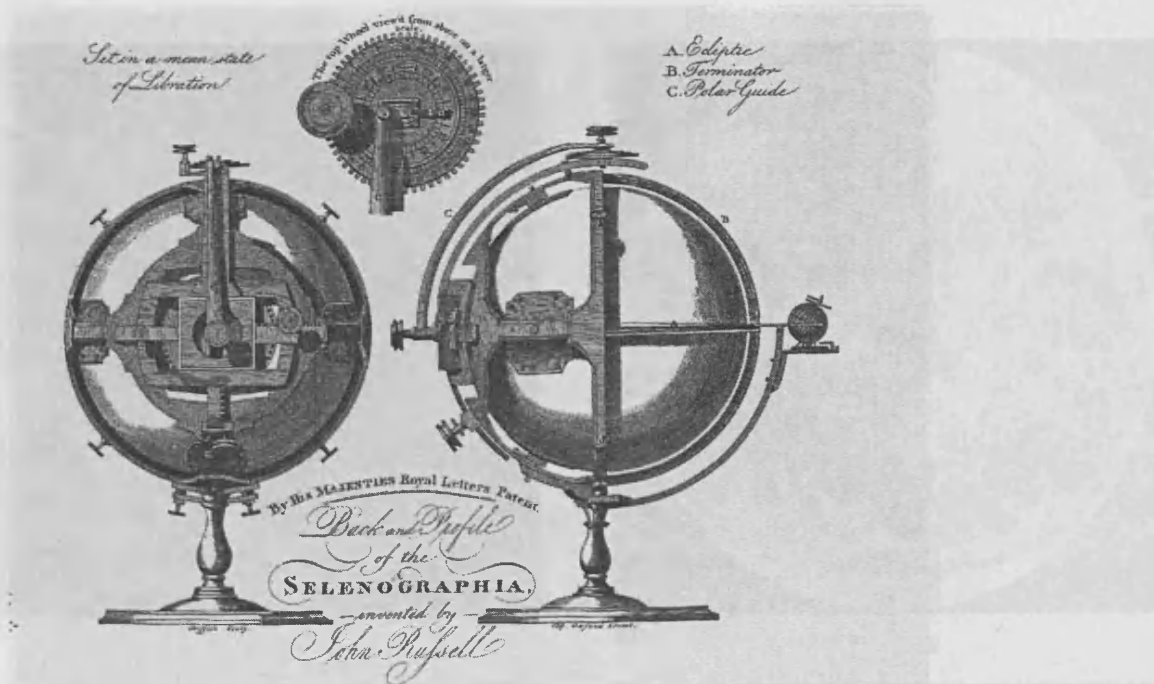
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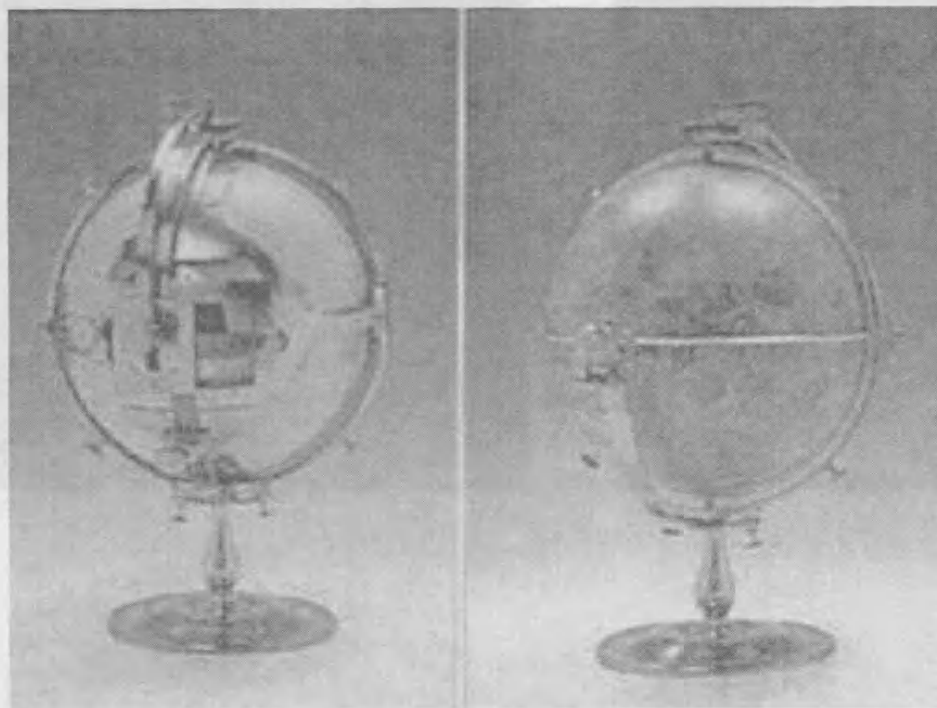
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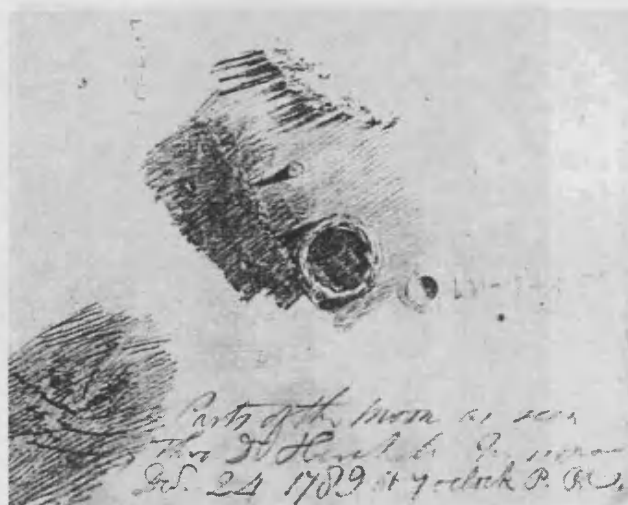
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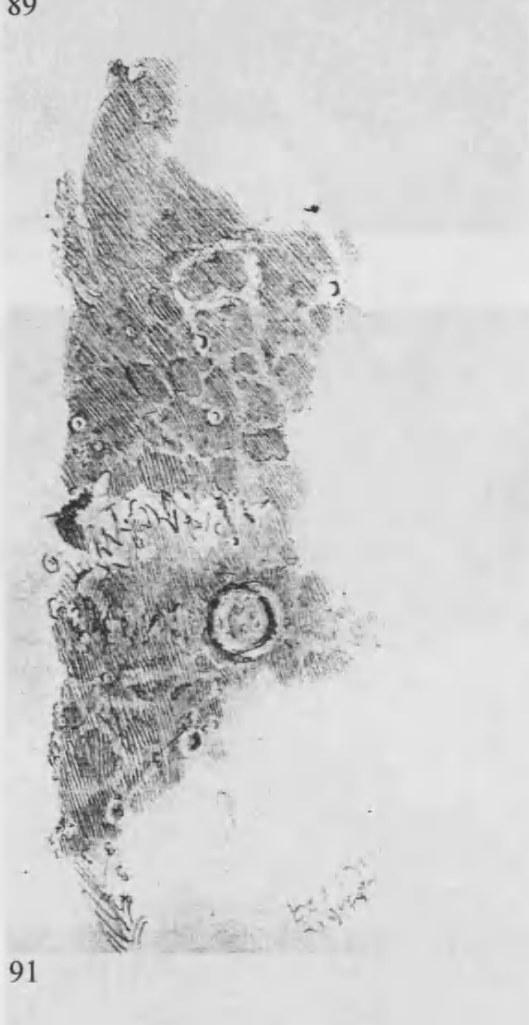
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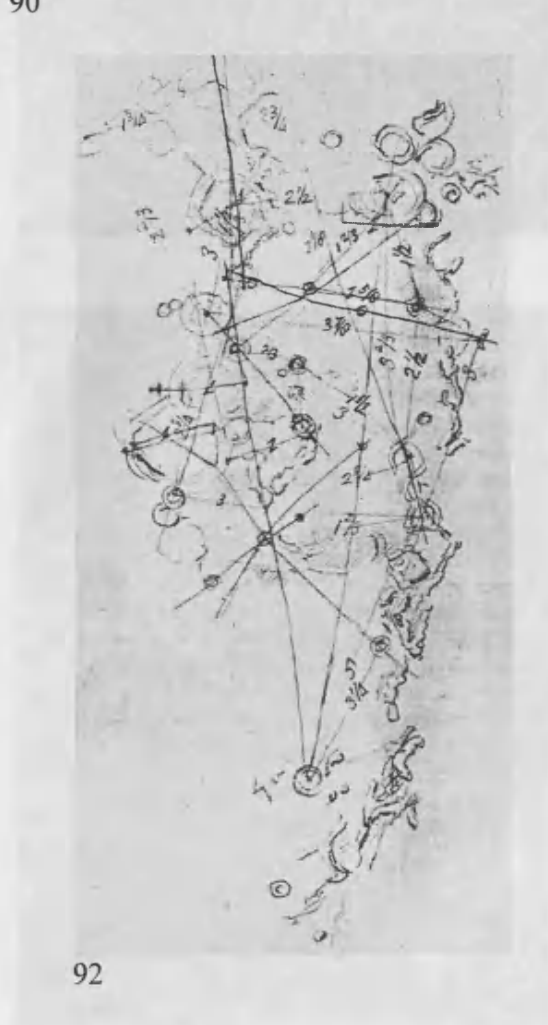
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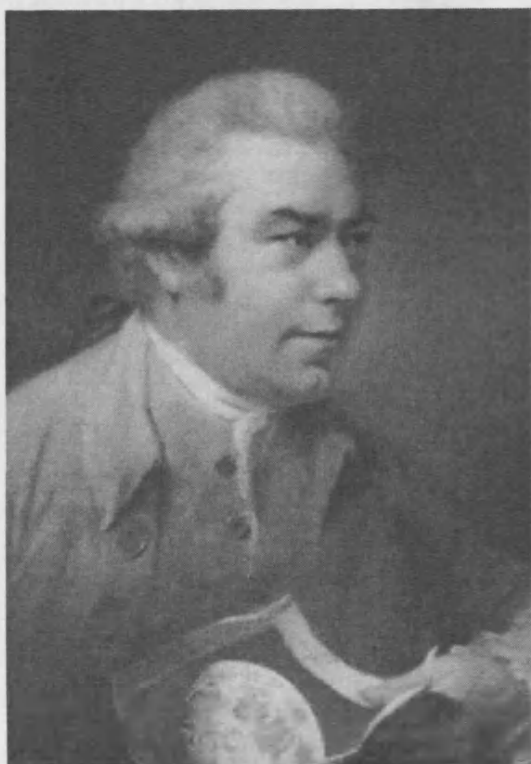
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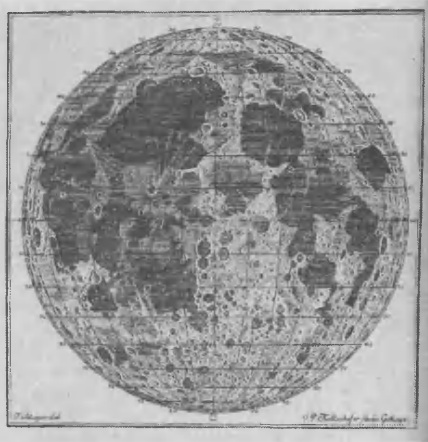


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#### Appendix 1: John Russell's maintenance instructions for his pastels<sup>721</sup>

"Let this direction be preserved. To be used as Occasion may require. Clean the Outside of the Glass; if the Picture does not then look Perfectly clear, the Inside should be cleaned also. Those who are not acquainted with Crayon Pictures, when they clean the Inside of the Glass should carefully attend to the following. Cut the Paper close to the Edge of the Frame, take off the Paper, and preserve it to be used again; draw the Brads. Remove the Backboard, and take out the Picture, being extremely cautious that its Surface be not injured by the slightest Touch; it may be prudent to turn its Face towards the Wall, and when the Glass is cleaned, immediately return the Picture into the Frame; fasten the Backboard with the Brads, by gentle Strokes of the Hammer; cover the backboard with the dry Sheet of Paper, which was taken off, and to prevent the Dust entering, with very thick Paste, connect its Edges to the Frame by Strips of Paper. If an accidental Brush deface the Picture, it can be repaired by a Crayon Painter, much more readily than an injured Oil Picture. Should a Spot of Mildew appear, a Leather Drawing Stump, or a Cork pointed, will take it off instantly, but this will never happen but from being placed in a damp Situation."

#### Appendix 2: Pictures exhibited by John Russell at the Royal Academy

The following list is based on Williamson's account.<sup>722</sup> **Bold writing indicates additions to Williamson's list by Algernon Graves.**<sup>723</sup>

1769

98. Micoe (**Micoc**) and her son Tootac. Esquimaux Indians brought over by Commodore Palliser. ("**Very natural**". – Walpole)

1770

158. Portrait of a Lady. **In crayons**  
159. Portrait of a Gentleman. **In oil, kitcat.**  
160. Portrait of a Gentleman. **small**

1771

170. Child with a Dog. ("**Very ugly Child**". – Walpole)  
171. Portrait of a Lady. **In crayons**  
269. A Clergyman. Oil. (C. Wesley.) P.O. Wesleyan Centenary Hall, Bishopsgate Street. **Small, whole length (C. Wesley)**  
[79.] **270.** Portrait of a **young** Gentleman.

1772

223. Portrait of a Gentleman. **kitcat**  
224. Child with Cat. **In crayons** P.O. Ald. Lawrence.

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<sup>721</sup> Williamson, 1894, p.89.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid., Appendix.

<sup>723</sup> Graves, 1906.

- 225. Child with Dog. Crayon.
- 226. Old Man's Head. Crayon.

1773

- 256. Portrait of a Lady of Quality.
- 257. Portrait of a Lady.
- 258. Flora and a Zephyr.

1774

- 249. Portrait of a Lady **of quality, in crayons**
- 250. Portrait of a Gentleman in a Masquerade Dress. **in crayons**
- 251. Portrait of a Young Gentleman. **in crayons**
- 252. Portrait of Lady in the Character of Diana. **in crayons**
- 253. A Vestal. **in crayons**
- 254. A Conversation. **small whole length**

1775

- 257. A Young Lady in the Character of a Shepherdess. Oil.  
**Small whole length (Miss Hill) (Miss Hill)**
- 258. Rev. Mr. Peckwell. Oil. **Half length**
- 259. Portrait of a Lady. **Large oval in crayons**
- 260. Portrait of a Gentleman. **in crayons**
- 261. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 262. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 263. Portrait of a Lady with Harvey's (Hervey's) "Meditations"  
**in a Flower Garden. in crayons**
- 264. Portrait of a Lady and Child. **in crayons**
- 265. Portrait of a Young Lady with Fox Dog. **in crayons**
- 266. Portrait of a Young Lady (**gentleman**) Reading. **in crayons**

1776

- 264. Portrait of a Lady Reading. (Miss Dean.)(**Miss Dean**) **in crayons**  
P.O. W. S. Jones, Esq.
- 265. Portrait of a Lady Reading. **Portrait of a Lady; in crayons)**
- 266. Portrait of a Young Gentleman. **in crayons**
- 267. Portrait of a Child. **in crayons**
- 268. Portrait of a Gentleman. **in crayons**
- 269. Portrait of a Child in the Character of Cupid. **in crayons**  
P.O. The family of the late A. Powell. Esq.
- 270. A similar picture, in oil. (**Portrait of a Child; in oil**)

1777

- 304. Portrait of Master Samuel Wesley. Oil. (**whole length**)  
P.O. M.E. Wesley, Esq.
- 305. Two Young Gentlemen with the Sensitive Plant. **in crayons**
- 306. Portrait of a Lady. **oval in crayons**

- 307. Portrait of a Lady. **oval in crayons**
- 308. Portrait of a Gentleman. **oval in crayons**
- 309. Portrait of a Lady. **oval in crayons**
- 310. Portrait of Dr. Boyce. **oval in crayons**
- 311. Portrait of a Lady. **oval in crayons**

1778

- 260. Portrait of a Gentleman. **oval in crayons**
- 261. Portrait of a Lady. **oval in crayons**
- 262. Portrait of a Lady in Turkish Habit. **in crayons**
- 263. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 264. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 265. Cottage Children. **in crayons**
- 266. Girl with Peaches. **in crayons** P.O. H. Webb, Esq.
- 267. Portrait of a Gentleman. **in crayons**

1779

- 277. Portraits of a Gentleman's Family.
- 278. Portraits of a Lady and Child. **Oval, in crayons**
- 279. Portrait of a Lady. **Oval, in crayons**
- 280. Portrait of a Young Gentleman.

1780

- 128. A Harvest Girl. P.O. The family of the late A. Powell, Esq.
- 317. A Candle-light.
- 318. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 324. A Candle-light.
- 330. A Boy with an Owl.
- 333. Portrait of a Lady. **[In Graves' account no number 333 exists.]**
- 247. Portraits of a Gentleman's Family.

1781

- 73. Portrait of a Lady in the Character of Hebe. Oil.
- 121. Portrait of a Gentleman. Oil
- 372. Girl with Cherries. **in crayons** P.O. Louvre
- 381. Girl with Eggs. **in crayons** P.O.
- The family of the late A. Powell, Esq.
- 436. A Chorister. Miniature.

1782

- 20. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 47. A Chorister.
- 299. Portrait of a Gentleman. Miniature.
- 311. Sandrina nell' opera (**nell opesa**) La Contadina in Corte.
- Miniature.
- 324. Portrait of a Lady. Miniature.

- 370. Portrait of a Clergyman.
- 385. Portrait of an Officer.
- 407. Portrait of a Young Gentleman.
- 415. Portrait of a Child with Dog.

1783

- 1. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 49. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 60. Portrait of a Lady in a Rubens' Dress.
- 127. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 147. Portrait of a Lady.
- 294. Frame with three miniatures.

1784

- 24. Portrait of a Gentleman. Oil (**J. Groves, with horse and dog; full length**)
- 97. Portrait of a Nobleman. **in crayons, oval profile – visible in Ramberg's drawing**
- 122. Portrait of a Lady of Quality. **in crayons, Lady Isabella Turnour; oval profile**
- 123. Portrait of a Young Lady of Quality. **in crayons, Lady Eliza Turnour, oval, child in hat, full face**
- 129. Portrait of a Young Lady of Quality. **in crayons, Miss Winterton, oval profile**
- 130. Portrait of a Lady of Quality. **Portrait of a young gentleman, crayons, Hon. Mr. Turnour, a boy, oval profile**
- 219. Portrait of an old Lady, aged 102, and her Granddaughter (**granddaughter's daughter**). Oil. (**Mrs. Brown and Miss Prest.**)
- 220. Portrait of a Lady of Quality. Oil. (**crayons, Lady Frances Turnour.**)
- 300. Emma, from Prior. Miniature.

1785

- 8. Portrait of a Clergyman. Oil. (**whole length**)
- 152. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 154. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 156. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 157. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 213. Portrait of a Clergyman. Oil. (**half length**)
- 334. The Sibyl. Ovid's "Met.", Book 14. Miniature.
- 428. Portrait of a Lady. Oil. (**whole length**)
- 440. Portrait of a Gentleman. **in crayons**
- 441. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**

1786

- 42. A Match Girl. Oil.
- 146. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**

- 147. Dr. Jeffreys Crossing the English Channel. **Crayons, In a balloon**
- 150. Portrait of a Nobleman. **in crayons**
- 151. Portrait of a Lady. **in crayons**
- 152. Mrs. (Mr.) Palmer. **in crayons**
- 154. The late Monsieur Pilatre de Rozier (**Rosier**). **in crayons**
- 155. A Sporting Gentleman with a Hooded Hawk. **in crayons**  
P.O. Lord Rosebery.
- 378. Portrait of a Gentleman. Oil. (Jackman.)  
P.O. Hospital of the Holy Trinity, Guildford.
- 427. Final Piety. P.O. Viscount Galway. (**Very good; girl's head sweet. A note in my catalogue**)
- 437. Mr. Glover. **in crayons**

1787

- 129. Children with Chickens. Oil P.O. Mrs. Russell.
- 155. A Bacchante.
- 156. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Siddons)(**Mrs. Siddons**)
- 157. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Mr. Johnson) (**Mr. Johnson**)
- 159. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Sir H. Mackworth) (**Sir H. Mackworth**)
- 161. Portrait of a Lady. (**Mrs. Yeanyby**)
- 191. Mr. Aicken.
- 377. Portrait of a Lady. (Miss Shaw.) (**Miss Shaw**)
- 378. Portrait of a Naval Officer. **Crayons, Captain Affleck**
- 449. Portrait of a Lady. **Crayons**
- 450. Portrait of a Mahomet Summy. **Crayons**

1788

- 143. The Peasant's Little Maid.
- 160. (**168.**) Portrait of a Lady and Child. **Oval, lady full face, visible in Ramberg's drawing**
- 170. Mrs. Wells as Madge in "Love in a Village." **Oval profile. Looking down; visible in Ramberg's drawing**
- 371. Portrait of a Lady.
- 420. The President of the Royal Society. (Sir J. Banks.)  
P.O. Lady Braebourne.
- 421. The Cake in Danger. P.O. W. Moore, Esq.
- 425. Portrait of a Lady Reading.
- 426. Portrait of a Nobleman. (Lord Southampton) (**Lord Southampton**)
- 427. Market Girl with a Duck.
- 439. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Mr. Topham.) (**Mr. Topham.**)  
P.O. Admiral Trollope.
- 444. Portrait of a Young Lady with a Squirrel. (Miss Halsey.)  
(**Miss Halsey.**) P.O. Mr. Woodyer
- 446. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Mr. G. Keate.)

1789

- 52. Portrait of an Artist. (Mr. Tyler, R.A.) (**Mr. Tyler, R.A.**)
- 154. The Chalk Writer. P.O. Webb, Esq.

156. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Dr. Willis.) **(Dr. Willis.)**  
P.O. Marquis of Exeter.
166. Portrait of a Young Gentleman. (Hon. George King.)  
P.O. E.G. King, Esq.
168. Portrait of a Lady. P.O. Lady Brabourne.
169. Portrait of a Lady. P.O. Lady Brabourne.
256. A Dutch Beggar.
273. Boys with Animals. P.O. C.B. Russell, Esq.
354. Portrait of a Gentleman. (J.W. Weston, Esq.)  
**(Sir Joseph Hawley – Walpole)** P.O. F. H. Salvin, Esq.
355. Mrs. Wells. P.O. Mrs. Gough Nicholls.
359. Cymon and Iphigene [sic].
362. Girl with Milk.
420. Finding of Moses.
421. Portrait of a Gentleman. **(Mr. Angelo, the fencer)**
422. Portrait of a Lady. **(Mrs. Tyler)**
426. Portrait of a Gentleman.
427. Portrait of a Lady. **(Mrs. Filcher or Mrs. Fisher)** P.O. Lady Brabourne.

1790

25. Her Majesty.
54. Portrait of a Young Lady. **(Miss Clarke)** P.O. Lady Brabourne.
60. Portrait of a Gentleman. **(Dr. John Willis)**
104. Portrait of a Young Lady of Quality. **(Lady Georgina Cavendish)**
118. Portrait of a Young Lady of Quality. **(Lady Harriet Cavendish)**
158. Portrait of a Lady. (Miss Goldsworthy) **(Miss Goldsworthy).**  
P.O. F.C. Carr Gomm, Esq.
164. A Sibyl. P.O. Miss Douglas.
- 183. Portrait of a Lady (Mrs. Lane)**
203. Callista **(Calista)** Reproved. P.O. Mrs. Cross.
206. Portrait of a Gentleman. **(Dr. Robert Wallis)**
218. Portrait of a Gentleman **(Clergyman).** (Dr. John Willis.)  
**(Dr. John Willis.)** P.O. Mrs. Willis.
220. Portrait of a Bishop (Dr. Shute Barrington,  
**Bishop of Salisbury).**
242. The Fortune-Teller. P.O. Rev. E. J. Russell.
248. The Little Lace-Makers. P.O. Rev. F.H. Bowles.
274. A Cottage Girl in the Sunshine.
276. Little Tired Wanderers. **The little tired wanderer.**
407. A View of Guildford, **in Surrey.**
418. St. Catherine's Hill by Moonlight.
431. Girl with Gold Fish.
440. Portrait of a Gentleman. (General Goldsworthy)  
**(General Goldsworthy)** P.O. F.C. Carr Gomm, Esq.
453. Portrait of a Gentleman.
465. Portrait of a Gentleman.

1791

- 13. Portrait of a Lady.
- 20. Portrait of a Lady.
- 51. Portrait of a Naval Officer.
- 90. Portrait of a Lady and Three Children. (Tophams.) (**Mrs. Wells**)  
P.O. Admiral Trollope.
- 134. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Fitzherbert) (**Mrs. Fitzherbert**)  
P.O. Fitzherbert, Esq.
- 141. A Girl with Basket.
- 142. A Physician. (Dr. Kennedy.) (**Dr. Kennedy.**)
- 157. Girl feeding Rabbits. **Girl feeding a rabbit.**
- 158. The Prince of Wales.
- 160. Boy with a Cat and Pigeons. P.O. Herbert Russell, Esq.
- 177. Portrait of a Nobleman. (Lord Eardley) (**Lord Eardley**)
- 183. A Grateful Turk Merchant.
- 188. Captain Blyth of "The Bounty" P.O. Mrs. Nutting.
- 434. Smoaker, The Prince of Wales's Bather at Brighton.  
P.O. The Queen

1792

- 133. Portrait of a Statuary. (John Bacon, R.A.) (**Mr. Bacon**)  
P.O. Rev. H.O. Bacon
- 162. The Orphans' Visit to their Parents' Tomb.  
P.O. C.B. Russell, Esq.
- 182. Prince of Wales as President of the Royal Kentish Bowmen
- 311. Portrait of a Lady. (Lady Frederick) (**Lady Frederick**)  
P.O. Rev. H.T. Fellowes
- 312. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Mr. Wignall) (**Mr. Wignall**)
- 371. Captain Mears of "The Nootka"
- 372. Portrait of a Lady. (Miss A. Desall) (**Dessell**)
- 381. An English Boor.
- 382. Mr. Mingay.
- 384. Cottage Felicity.
- 387. An American who was captured by the Algerines.
- 396. One of the Porters of the Royal Academy. P.O. Dr. Shurlock.
- 447. Portrait of a Lady. (**Miss E. or C. Dessell**)
- 524. Cleopatra. P.O. Rev. S. Russell.

1793

- 57. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Casa Major.) (**Mrs. Casa-major**)
- 133. Portrait of a Young Lady. (**Miss Strutt**)
- 139. Portrait of a Lady. (Miss Keate.) (**Miss Keate.**)  
P.O. Col. Henderson
- 237. Portrait of an Officer. (**Captain Hunter**)
- 238. Young Artists. (**The artist's two sons, William and Tom**)  
P.O. F.H. Webb, Esq.
- 298. Alderman Langstone. P.O. E.A. Ollivant.
- 299. Portrait of an Officer. (**Captain Rainsforth**)

- 310. Portrait of a Lady.
- 321. Love Songs and Matches. P.O. Rev. F.H. Bowles
- 505. A Young Lady. (Miss Strutt) (**Miss Strutt**) P.O. Lord Rayleigh
- 521. Lady Grantley. P.O. Lord Grantley.
- 527. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Mr. Martyn) (**Mr. Martyr**)
- 674. Portrait of a Clergyman. (Mr. Costlegon.) (**Mr. Coetlogen**)
- 675. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Mr. Garrow.) (**Mr. Garrow.**)

1794

- 58. Hart the Herbalist.
- 108. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 142. Boy Blowing Bubbles. P.O. Ald. Lawrence.
- 182. Portrait of a Lady.
- 211. Portrait of a Lady.
- 216. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 319. Market Girl with Pigs. P.O. Lord Methuen.
- 334. Arthur Young, Esq. P.O. F.B.Ruggles Brise, Esq.
- 415. Portrait of a Gentleman.

1795

- 149. Portrait of a Young Lady.
- 151. Portrait of a Lady. (Miss Chambers.) (**Miss Chambers.**)  
P.O. J.E. Ollivant, Esq.
- 246. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Sir Walter James.) (**Sir W. James.**)
- 258. Portrait of a Young Lady.
- 294. Frontispiece to Dr. Thornton's Book. (**Frontispiece to  
Dr. Thornton's illustration of the Sexual System**)
- 295. Artifice and Credulity. P.O. Lord Methuen.
- 354. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 369. Miss Wright.
- 377. An Astronomer. (Dr. Herschel.) (**Dr. Herschel.**)  
P.O. Sir W. Herschel
- 379. Portrait of an Officer. (**General Sydenham.**) P.O. R.C.Bell, Esq.
- 410. Portrait of a Lady.

1796

- 172. Portrait of a Gentleman.
- 174. Rev. Mr. Clarke.
- 207. The Nocturnal Cereus presented to Hymen, for Dr. Thornton's  
Book. (**for Dr. Thornton's Botanical Work**)
- 295. Mr. George Spence
- 296. Portrait of a Lady.
- 355. The Old Bathing Woman of Brighton (**Martha Green**) with a Child.  
P.O. The Queen.
- 419. A Jamaica Gentleman.
- 501. An Officer of the London and Westminster Volunteers.



1797

- 46. A Lady with her Children in Hindostany [sic]. (Mrs. Plowden.)  
(Mrs. Plowden.) P.O. Sir Wm. Plowden.
- 431. Girl with a Tambourine. P.O. Miss Vallotton.
- 439. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Colonel St. Paul)
- 446. Portrait of a Nobleman. (Lord Macdonald) (Lord Macdonald)
- 456. Portrait of a Lady. (Miss Whitehead) (Miss Whitehead)
- 498. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Lee) (Mrs. Lee)
- 503. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Boswell.) (Mrs. Boswell.)
- 512. Portrait of a Young Gentleman. (Mr. C. Plowden, Jun.)  
(Mr. C. Plowden, Jun.)
- 515. A Child with Puppies. P.O. Shurlock.
- 516. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Taylor.) (Mrs. Taylor.)
- 526. Charles and his Cat.

1798

- 142. Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Onslow, who first broke the Dutch line  
in the late memorable action under Rear-Admiral Lord Duncan.  
Sir Richard is represented as receiving Vice-Admiral Reintze's flag, whose  
ship he captured. P.O. The Corporation of Huilford. Designed for the Town  
Hall at Guilford. [sic]
- 151. Mrs. Thornton. P.O. Mrs. Knolleche.
- 337. Miss Morgan with a Tambourine. P.O. Lord Methuen.
- 347. 349. Lord Dudley and Ward. P.O. Earl of Dudley.
- 371. (Lady Dudley) Lady Dudley and Ward. P.O. Earl of Dudley.
- 396. (Mr.) Sir William Morgan. P.O. Lord Methuen.
- 414. A Lady and her Children. (Jeans family) (Jeans family)  
P.O. Rev. G.E. Jeans
- 441. Honourable Mr. Ward
- 569. The Mayor of Guildford. P.O. Misses Russell.
- 637. Mrs. Lushington. P.O. F.H. Webb, Esq.

1799

- 199. The Loiterers.
- 344. Mrs. Caldwell as the muse Terpsichore. P.O. Miss Isabel Johnson.
- 359. Mrs. W. Lushington
- 361. Mr. Blair
- 362. Mr. Collins of Devizes.
- 377. The Warrener's Boy with a Ferret. P.O. Mrs. Holesgrove.
- 378. Rev. Mr. Cuthbert.
- 380. Mrs. Grant and her Daughter, with the Standard presented to the  
Westminster Volunteer Cavalry.
- 395. Mrs. Anderson and her Children.
- 405. Miss Lake.
- 406. Dr. Thornton, Author of Botanical Book. (Author of the new  
illustration of Sexual System of Linnaeus)
- 421. The Secret.
- 446. Dr. Smith, President of the Linnean Society. P.O. Linnean Society

1800

- 16. Mrs. Scott-Waring and Children.
- 121. Earl of Exeter.
- 148. Dr. Willis. P.O. Marquis of Exeter.
- 248. Lord Burghley, Lady S. Cecil, and Honourable Mr. Cecil.  
(children of the Earl of Exeter)  
P.O. Col. Lord Charles Wellesley
- 658. Mrs. Banister
- 673. Mrs. Pullan. P.O. Mrs. C. Pullan
- 677. Mrs. Geo. Bates. P.O. J.E. Ollivant, Esq
- 691. Mr. J. Bannister. P.O. Robert Johnson, Esq.

1801

- 6. Portrait of a Northern Light Horse Volunteer.  
P.O. Rev. Canon Keymer.
- 135. Mrs. Jordan, the celebrated comedian.
- 153. John Bacon, R.A. **statuary** P.O. Rev. H.V. Bacon
- 322. T. Plummer, Esq.
- 335. Miss E. and Miss L. Earle. P.O. Dr. Earle.
- 336. Master Aufreere. P.O. G.L. Rives, Esq.
- 352. Mrs. Spencer.
- 418. Folly interrupting Meditation.

1802

- 26. Field Officer in a Volunteer Corps.
- 383. Lady M. Beauclerk.
- 391. Mrs. Hind and her Children. P.O. Mrs. Holdsworth.
- 392. Mrs. Hillyer. P.O. Miss Onslow.
- 405. Mr. Banister as Lenetive, in "The Prize" P.O. Garrick Club.
- 406. Mr. Hillyer. P.O. Miss Onslow.
- 490. **409.** Tom with his Mother's Letter.
- 763. Mrs. **Mr.** Charrington.

1803

- 203. A Cottage Grandfather.
- 362. Lady Johnstone and her Children. P.O. Lord Derwent.
- 385. Dr. Shaw of the British Museum. P.O. F.H. Webb, Esq.
- 386. St. Giles' Songstress. "**O call me not lazy-back, beggar and bold enough, etc.**" P.O. Rev. T. Sheepshanks
- 397. Child with Strawberries. P.O. H. Webb, Esq.
- 398. Mrs. Jowett with a Pug. P.O. Dr. Shurlock.
- 431. Peace and Plenty. Portrait of a Lady.
- 567. **467.** J. Stackhouse, Esq., P.O. W.C. Pendarves, Esq.

1804

88. Preparation for the French Master. P.O. Mrs. Goodwin  
226. A Thirsty **Group** at the Spring. P.O. Rev. John Holden.  
388. Portrait of a Lady. (Mrs. Stackhouse) (**Mrs. Stackhouse**)  
P.O. W.C. Pendarves, Esq.  
389. Portrait of two Young Ladies. (Ann and Maria Russell).  
(**Ann and Maria Russell**) P.O. Mrs. Cross.  
395. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Col.**onel** Booth.)  
422. Portrait of a Gentleman. (Rev. Dr. Hawker.) (**Rev. Dr. Hawker.**)  
P.O. P.L. Jones, Esq.  
423. Portrait of two Brothers. (Two sons of Thomas Pitt, Esq.)  
(**Two sons of Thomas Pitt, Esq.**)

1805

184. **200.** Mr. Jeffreys, the King's Goldsmith.  
241. The Slumber of the Aunt permits the Clandestine Marriage.  
433. An Engineer Officer in the East India Company's Service.  
(Samuel Russell.) (**Samuel Russell.**)  
434. Mr. H. Brown  
446. Mrs. Pease. P.O. F. Pease, Esq.  
457. Mrs. Austin.  
472. Mrs. Bonar. P.O. Miss Bonar.  
486. The Children of Captain Pierrepont.

1806

252. Sailor Orphan, whose father lost his life by the explosion of  
the "Queen Charlotte" in the Mediterranean  
454. F. Constable, Esq., of Burton Constable.  
489. Miss Walker.

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- **Vol. 11** Translations of selected shorthand passages from volumes 8 and D, by the Rev. S.H. Russell, c.1840-54, shelf-mark 86.FF.48.
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Russell (1862), also transcribed by A.M. Cross, manuscript, NAL, shelf-mark MSL/1925/1838.

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The sketchbooks begin to be labelled with sketchbook A, which is why the three volumes with antiques and anatomical studies are post labelled. This is no indication of chronological order.

- **Vol. 1** Antiques and anatomical studies, shelf-mark 120.51.
- **Vol. 2** Antiques and anatomical studies, shelf-mark 121.51.
- **Vol. 3** Antiques, shelf-mark 122.51.
- **Sketchbook A** Children, Windsor, Eton, Ratcliff, shelf-mark P.111.51.
- **Sketchbook B** Guildford, Guildford castle, flowers, trees etc., shelf-mark P.112.51.
- **Sketchbook C** Guildford, Stoke, etc., trees, shelf-mark P.113.51.
- **Sketchbook D** Waverley, Godalming etc., chicken, Eskimos, signed and dated 1787, shelf-mark P.114.51.
- **Sketchbook E** Guildford, Worcester, Shrewsbury etc., trees , and orang-utan, signed and dated 1780, shelf-mark P.115.51.
- **Sketchbook F** Oxford, Blenheim etc., signed and dated 1781, shelf-mark P.116.51.
- **Sketchbook G** Chichester, Portsmouth, Guildford, London, trees, signed and dated 1785, shelf-mark P.117.51.
- **Sketchbook H** Lewes, Shoreham, Brighton, Leeds, York etc., signed and dated 1795-1801, shelf-mark P.118.51.
- **Sketchbook I** Leeds, York, Greenwich etc., shelf-mark P.119.51.

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