Two new Coleridge letters: The Angels of Paternoster Row

Justin Shepherd[1]

TWO NEW COLERIDGE LETTERS HAVE RECENTLY COME TO LIGHT, to be added to the fifteen letters which E L Griggs printed from Coleridge to the firm of booksellers and publishers originally known as Gale & Curtis. One is to Thomas Curtis, one of the two founding partners, and the other is to his brother, Samuel, a printer. Although this firm was never more than a minor publishing house, which eventually collapsed in March 1819 with subsequent allegations of fraud from Coleridge, nevertheless they published a series of his most important volumes. These include *The Statesman's Manual, A Lay Sermon, Biographia Literaria, Sibylline Leaves, The Friend,* and *Zapolya*, a record unmatched by any of Coleridge's other publishers. Neither letter is a brief or routine business note. Both add significantly to our knowledge of the production history of *A Statesman's Manual* and *A Lay Sermon* and help fill out the picture of his troubled relations with the 'Angels of Paternoster Row', as he ironically referred to the book trade (CL III 328).[2]

Although both letters are undated, we can be sure that both were written between 14 November and early December 1816 for the reasons given below. The earlier, much longer letter, is to Samuel Curtis, who ran the Camberwell Press in Southampton Place, Camberwell. The second is to his brother Thomas Curtis, also of Camberwell, who was still very active in the publishing house by then known as Rest Fenner. ('Rest' is the Christian name of Fenner, who came from a long line of non-conformist booksellers in Canterbury going back to the seventeenth century, many of whom are also called 'Rest'.) The letter to Samuel Curtis shows Coleridge's attempts to ensure that *The Statesman's Manual* is printed according to his wishes and reveals Coleridge's overwrought state at the time. The other letter, much cooler in tone, reflects Coleridge's growing wariness of Thomas. Both letters also cast light on Coleridge's numerous literary commitments and on his struggle to complete what was eventually published as *A Lay Sermon*.

Provenance

The present keeper of these letters took advantage of the March 2020 lock-down to work on some five boxes of family papers, amongst which he found, entirely unexpectedly, these two undated letters. They appear to have come into the family as a result of a friendship between Thomas Curtis, Coleridge's publisher, and John Sheppard (1784-1837) and his son Samuel Sheppard (1809-1870), the great-great grandfather of the present owners. The connection is a religious one, and the idiosyncratic nature of the religious context provides

[1] I would like to thank the present keeper of these letters and his sister for allowing them to be published. They have prepared scans, shared family material, answered all my queries and helped in every way they could. I am very grateful to them. I would also like to thank Tim Fulford and Graham Davidson for their enthusiastic and generous help and support. All errors are mine, and if not mine, the editor's.

[2] Paternoster Row in the City of London was the centre of the book trade. For more on Coleridge and the 'Angels' and 'Cormorants' of Paternoster Row, see Long Note 4 below.

welcome light on Thomas Curtis, whom otherwise we only view through the eyes of Coleridge.[3]

Dating

Both letters were written after Coleridge's return from a sea-side holiday and rest-cure with James Gillman on Wednesday 13 November 1816. 'I leave Mudiford for Highgate …this day week…' (CL IV 687). The first and much longer letter to Samuel Curtis was probably written not long after Coleridge's return, indicated by the fact that he believed there was still time to make revisions to the title page and printed text of *The Statesman's Manual*. The letter to Thomas Curtis was almost certainly written later. By this time the opportunity for revisions to *The Statesman's Manual* was clearly past and the letter makes no reference to it. We know that it was printed, bound and ready for distribution to friends before the end of November. 'The inclosed ought to have reached you last week; and it was by accident that I discovered the piece of forgetfulness which occasioned the delay.' (CL IV 695) The letter contains the same reference to extreme overwork as is found in the letter to R H Brabant of 5 December and expressed in similar language. (CL IV 691-2) I suggest, therefore, that the probable date for Letter No 2 is around the same date as the one to Brabant.

Some Contexts

Coleridge had put himself in the care of James Gillman in April 1816 and, although the *Christabel* volume was published soon after by John Murray, when he once more considered publication of *The Friend* in book form, he felt morally obliged to offer it to Gale & Curtis, whom he had first approached in 1812. He soon found himself agreeing to write three brief pamphlets for them, without payment and as a favour, addressing the current political, economic and social problems. He referred to these as 'sermons'. The first came to be called *The Statesman's Manual*, the second was eventually published as *A Lay Sermon,* and the third was never written. These expanded considerably in the writing and became the cause of immense stress at a time when Coleridge had a bewildering number of other literary projects in hand. In addition to these 'sermons', his literary commitments included newspaper work; dealing with the complex negotiations with John M Gutch in Bristol over publication of *Biographia Literaria*; reworking *The Friend;* consideration of the launch of a new review of German thought and literature and, by November, also included work with Gillman on the *Essay on Scrofula*, which eventually developed into a bigger project, published posthumously as *Notes towards a more Comprehensive Theory of Life*. (SWF I 454-479; 481-555)

By September he was close to collapse. He finally managed to send off the text of *The Statesman's Manual* to the printers without having time revise it, and Gillman whisked him away for a seaside holiday in 'Mudiford', now Mudeford,

[3] For more on this connection, see Long Notes 3 and 4 below.

near Christchurch, where he gradually regained his composure. A further cause of stress were the brutal attacks on him in the periodical press. These included the anonymous, unremittingly hostile review in the *Edinburgh Review* of the *Christabel* volume in September, which Coleridge suspected was by Hazlitt[4], and Hazlitt's unsigned 'review' in the *Examiner* of *The Statesman's Manual*, which was written before its publication and was based only on what he had surmised as to its contents from the publisher's advance advertisement.[5]

In Mudeford, where he remained for two months, Coleridge rested and undertook social calls. He helped Gillman with his paper on Scrofula for the Jacksonian Essay Prize and picked up the threads of his correspondence. This included two long letters to Rest Fenner, his new publishers. In the first, he laid out with remarkable frankness the nature of his dependency on opium along with a meditation on Christian forgiveness. Having cleared the air, in a second letter he moved onto discussion of financial terms and conditions in a pragmatic and cogent manner. However, towards the end, Coleridge's vulnerability is made plain when he writes of his 'pain of surprise' on hearing Gillman's account of Thomas Curtis's brusque refusal to let Gillman have a copy of *The Friend*, which Coleridge had requested so that he could begin work on a new expanded edition. Gillman had had to pay out of his own pocket. Coleridge is outraged by the manner of Curtis's refusal, in which there was an unmistakeable implication of Coleridge's unreliability in financial matters. He feels he has been humiliated in front of his friend and protector. Relations with Curtis had taken an unfortunate turn. (CL IV 674-682)

On his return to Highgate in mid-November, Coleridge resumed work in earnest. Thomas Curtis took on the role of managing 'their' author. His first priority was to see the *Lay Sermons* through the press, then to keep his brother's printing works busy with any other available copy, and finally to make sure that the remaining works which Coleridge had signed over were published as soon as possible. These two new letters were written in the three-week period immediately following his return to Highgate.[6]

Transcription Protocols and Conventions [7]

In general, I have observed the conventions set out by Professors Tim Fulford and Sharon Ruston in their collected edition of the letters of Sir Humphrey Davy (4 Vols. Oxford 2020), although I have retained some aspects of E L Griggs's style of headnote as being more familiar to readers of Coleridge's letters. Overall, I have made minor adjustments more appropriate to publication of these two letters in a journal than in volume form.

---

[4] The attribution of this review has been much debated by scholars, but the issue remains unresolved. See Benatti, Francesca and Tonra, Justin (2015). 'English Bards and Unknown Reviewers: a Stylometric Analysis of Thomas Moore and the *Christabel* Review'. *Breac: A Digital Journal of Irish Studies*, October).

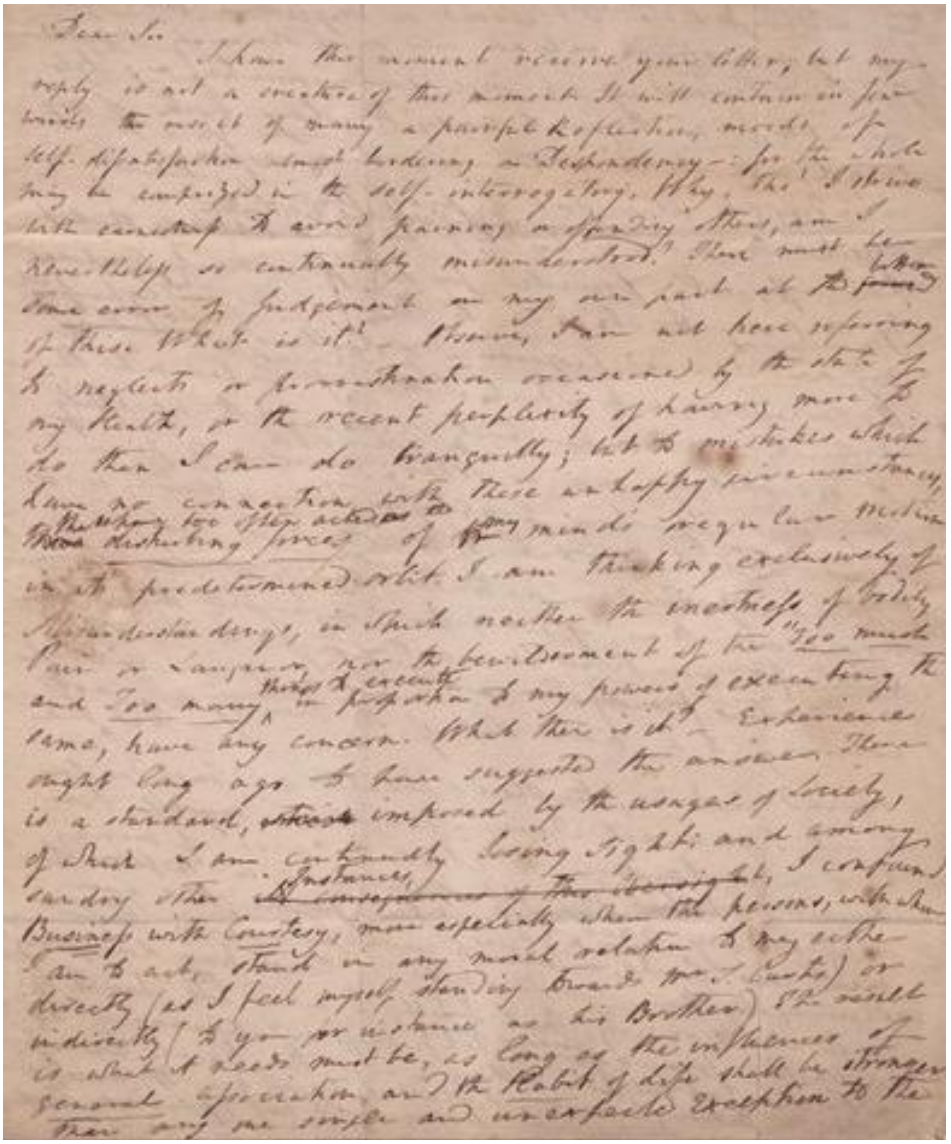
[5] Both reviews are to be found in *Coleridge: The Critical Heritage* ed. R de J Jackson (Routledge, London 1970), 226-236 and 248-253.

[6] For a detailed chronology see Long Note 1 below.

[7] These transcriptions have been prepared from scans. Pandemic regulations have prevented examination of the original manuscripts.

There are no postmarks or endorsements for either letter. Line breaks in the address sheets are indicated. Coleridge's spellings have been retained, as has his punctuation and his use of initial capitals for certain nouns. He sometimes omitted full stops, using a dash and a capital to indicate that a sentence had ended and a new one begun.

Illegible words of any length are represented as '[[xxxx]]' in the letter text. Square brackets are used in headnotes for conjectural dates, as '[?1 January 1800]'. Angle brackets '[<….>]' are used to indicate an authorial insertion of text above or below the line of the letter text. Underlined words in the original manuscript are represented as '[*italics*]'. Double underlinings are represented as '[*italics*]'. Cancelled words or letters in the original manuscript are indicated by the use of a '[~~strikethrough~~]'.



The opening page of Coleridge's letter to Samuel Curtis. The numerous deletions, corrections, insertions and underlinings indicate his emotions and the difficulty he was finding in responding fittingly to Curtis's letter, which he had just read.

To Samuel Curtis

Address: Mr S. Curtis/ Printer/ Southampton Place/ Camberwell[8]
MS. In private hands. Hitherto unpublished.
Date: [? Sunday 24 November 1816][9]

Dear Sir

I have this moment received your letter, but my reply is not a creature of this moment.[10] It will contain in few words the result of many painful Reflections, moods of self-dissatisfaction, almost bordering on Despondency – : for the whole may be comprized in the self-interrogating, Why, tho' I strive with earnestness to avoid paining or offending others, am I nevertheless continually misunderstood? There be some error of judgement on my own part at the found <bottom> of this. What is it?[11] –Observe, I am not here referring to neglects or procrastination occasioned by the state of my Health, or the recent perplexity of having more to do than I can tranquilly; but to mistakes which have no connection with these unhappy circumstances, that <that have too often acted as the> *disturbing forces* of [xxxx] <my> mind's regular motion in its' predetermined orbit. I am thinking exclusively of Misunderstandings, in which neither the inertness of bodily Pain or Languor, nor the bewilderment of the "*Too much* and *Too many* < things to execute> in proportion to my powers of executing the same, have any concern. What then is it? Experience ought long ago to have suggested the answer. There is a standard, [xxxx] imposed by the usages of Society, of which I am continually losing sight: and among sundry other [xxxx] consequences of this oversight, Instances, I confound *Business with Courtesy*, more especially when the person, with whom I am to act, stand in any moral relation to me, either directly (as I feel myself standing towards Mr T. Curtis) or indirectly (to you for instance as his Brother).[12] The result is what it needs must be as long as the influences of *general* association and the *Habit* of *Life* shall be stronger than any single and unexpected Exception to the <every-day> Rule.[13] Now to apply this to the subject of your this morning's note.[14] I received a suggestion thro' you from your much valued and most sincerely respected Brother. Instead of at once communicating my

[8] Southampton Place no longer exists. It was probably off Southampton Street, now Southampton Row.

[9] In giving this Sunday date I have been led by the references in the letter to a planned meeting 'on Monday morning' and to 'my seeing you here tomorrow morning'. These probably, but not certainly, refer to the same meeting. Sunday postal services operated in London at the time.

[10] This letter from Samuel Curtis, which arrived by first post at about 8.00 am, was an angry response to a letter from C the previous week in which he had insisted on changes to the printed title-page and text of *The Statesman's Manual*. If SC's letter was posted the previous day, Saturday 23 November, it was posted too late for same day delivery.

[11] The 'error' to which he alludes is that of treating those with whom he has business dealings as individuals rather than as professional men or tradesmen only, as was the convention. This deliberate 'error' is allied with his critique of 'expediency' and self-interest in public life.

[12] Coleridge felt morally obligated to T C primarily because it was his firm which had taken on what turned out to be the abortive publication of *The Friend* in 1812.

[13] C is again contrasting the 'every-day Rule' of expediency with his own way of treating people as individuals.

[14] The 'subject' was S C's complaint about what he took to be the peremptory tone of Coleridge's letter of the previous week rejecting S C's suggested title.

determination, I sent, as it were, the *day-book*[15] of my mind, with all its' entrances and *crossings-off* – intending it as a sort of proof that I had not rejected or modified his proposal <without respectful deliberation,> and supposing that I had sufficiently provided for all practical purposes by *confining* the choice to the three titles, and <when I> expressing<ed> my own decided preference of the third – aided by <add to which> the earnestness, with which I had <previously> pointed out the propriety and (comparatively speaking), the necessity of substituting one or other <for the proposed titles> in order to prevent my own assertion (p 45) from being utterly incorrespondent to the fact.[16] As the title-pages now stand, I have asserted an untruth -- And you, dear Sir! know as well as, if not better than, myself that I have enemies (the more bitter because they ought to be my most zealous friends) who would gladly give a moral colouring to a mere Slip of the Memory.[17] But <as to> the second instance, the sheet of Errata and Emendanda[18] to wit, I know not whence I can blame myself. For how could I endure to cloak a wish of mine, however important it might appear to me, in the form of the peremptory *order* <to you>-- & I must have forgotten, that your name was Curtis,[19] in order <if I was> to convey my meaning [xxxx] <more> unequivocally than I did. I must at least have done away with all the anxiety, which I felt, to avoid all <the> chance of detracting from your <character of> watchfulness and accuracy as a Printer - at the first setting out in this line of Business. For the future, however, I shall entreat you to accept beforehand my assurance, that whatever directions I may see occasion to give, are directed to the *Compositor* not to *you* & shall therefore say at once *let this be done!*[20]

With regard to *Copy* I had in consequence of my interview with your Brother, [21] made up my mind to work on as hard as I could: or rather <but> to put into your hand as much as would employ you <of> [xxxx] the first sheets of the Friend: [xxxx] [xxxx] according to such arrangements, as we might form when

---

[15] A 'day-book' is a business term and refers to a simple daily log of transactions from which later more formal accounts are written up.

[16] This issue of the titles of his *Lay Sermons*, 'a most unfortunate name' (CL IV 706), was of central importance to C, because, although according to the advertisement on the back wrapper of *SM*, they were to be 'printed so as to make one uniform volume', they were each to be aimed at a different audience, a fact which was to govern their contents and style. The title was intended to be *The Statesman's Manual*, or '*the Bible considered as containing the Elements of political Wisdom & Foresight*' (CL IV 673). This wording differs significantly from S C's version, *The STATESMAN'S MANUAL; THE BIBLE THE BEST GUIDE TO POLITICAL SKILL AND FORESIGHT,* which seems to encourage the kind of literal reading of the bible which C abhorred. Furthermore, 'The Title…ought to have been, and I had so directed it – addressed to the Learned and Reflecting of all Ranks and Professions, especially among the Higher Class' (CL IV 695). S C had substituted simply, 'Addressed to the higher classes of society'.

[17] Coleridge's fears were well founded. As R J White explains, 'In his review of *SM* in the Examiner 29 Dec 1816 Hazlitt quoted the passage, (below, p 36) in which C writes of the audience to whom *SM* was addressed, not "to a promiscuous audience" but "as exclusively *ad clerum*; i.e. (in the old and wide sense of the word) to men of *clerkly* attainments, of whatever profession", and remarked: "All that we know is, that there is no such title-page to our copy", and continued with satiric reference to "his printed title-page" and "that which is not printed". H Works VII 124, 125'. (LS 3-4 n 1)

[18] Errors and Corrections.

[19] A Coleridgean pun: Curtis/courteous.

[20] C is here explaining that any perceived brusqueness in the manner in which his instructions had been expressed was because they were, and would be, addressed not to S C himself, a Master Printer and the owner of the business, but to the apprentice or journeyman who was doing the actual type setting ('the Compositor').

[21] For more on this meeting see the entry for [Monday 18 November] in LN 1 below.

[xxxx] [xxxx] <we met>, as I expected, on Monday morning. Let me explain myself. The day but one, after your Brother was with me, I found myself in consequence of my letter to Bristol & the answer received thrown[22]out from the work before me so far that it would not be possible for me to finish the sermons within the time, I had hoped, I might Therefore I formed the determination of getting ready, all that I could, and at the same time to deliver to you such a quantity of the Friend, as might fill up the interstices of the other copy.[23]

Be assured, no Prisoner could look forward to a Pardon with and Liberation with more heart-sick intensity of desire, than I do to the finishing sheet of these sermons, in order to devote myself [xxxx] entirely to the (comparatively) delightful task of re-moulding the Friend – and chiefly on this account, that in the latter I can calculate & ascertain with sufficient precision for practical purpose what I can do; but in the sermons, from the exceeding delicacy of the subject, and even the personal danger,[24] I cannot do this – and have over and over declared, [xxxx] that I can promise to others no more than I dare promise myself – namely, to do my best.

Lest the weather or similar accidents shall prevent my seeing you here tomorrow morning I shall send off this scrawl by the 9 o'clock 3^{d} Post[25] that it may remain with you as a proof that I can never intend anything disrespectful to you. Verily, it would scarcely occur to me to open out my state of feeling so openly to a man, who [xxxx] <had> not from other relations than those of his Printer a claim on the Respect and unfeigned good Wishes of, dear Sir,

your obliged

S.T. Coleridge.

---

[22] Both lost.

[23] 'Interstices' is a printing term meaning 'gaps' or 'spaces'. C is here referring to the additional copy he is supplying to fill out the original sheets of *The Friend* for the new, expanded edition.

[24] These sermons were written to address the social and political ills resulting from the economic slump following the end of the Napoleonic wars. C knew that any such intervention would attract controversy and personal attacks in the periodical press.

[25] The Three-penny post was the service which covered the area immediately outside central London. This included Camberwell.

To Thomas Curtis

Address: Revd T. Curtis/ Camberwell [26]
MS. In private hands. Hitherto unpublished.
Date: [? early December 1816]

Dear Sir

I have been [xxxx] <more> anxious than you can have been concerning the Papers from Bristol[27] – and unless absence be the cause, I can not even guess it. I sent in this morning to Mr Hardy's, Lombard St, whither they were to be directed, in hopes of them having arrived last night.[28] –

This therefore is no fault of mine – but I will tell you with perturbed spirit and sore limbs what has been./ I felt that there were claims on my gratitude, & in that feeling could not resist a request, the compliance with which might possibly turn out of signal importance to our Friends' Establishment in Life[29]—Likewise, I was anxiously desirous to accommodate your Brother in so benevolent a purpose as that of retaining his workmen in these hard times[30] – and most ready you, my dear Sir, have found me, and your brother will report me to have been, in doing any thing on which you had fixed your wishes –

When your Brother was here[31], and condescended to be my amanuensis,[32] I told him that till I had done one thing which it was *necessary* to do before the first of January (& I fully expect to have compleated it before [xxxx] Christmas Day[33]) I could not be so regular as he would find me afterwards – having vowed, that I never would make a similar promise. – When I add, that for the last fortnight I have worked from *16 to 17 hours* every day, that my sleep has on *the average* not exceeded 4 in the 24 – that I sat up till six this morning & rose again at 9[34] – and that I feel all over (head excepted) *like a clump of wood in pain*

---

[26] Note that C here uses the title 'Reverend', which T C had begun to use by 1815. Baptists do not generally use this term and C later wrote scornfully about T C's adoption of it. (See LN 5 below.) The omission of a specific street address and the use of 'Camberwell' only in the address may suggest that the T C was sufficiently prominent in the area for delivery not to need further details. It is possible that he lived with his brother on the premises of the Camberwell Press in Southampton Place.

[27] These are probably the long-delayed sheets of *BL* which Gutch had been withholding and which eventually arrived on 18 December. See Editors' Introduction to *BL* for further details. (BL I lviii-lxv). Gutch's letter of 18 Dec 1816 is printed in Appendix C (BL II 289-292)

[28] Lombard Street in the City of London was the site of the old General Post Office from 1680 until it moved to St Martin's-le-Grand in 1829. It dealt with post between London and the rest of the British Isles. I have been unable to identify Mr Hardy. However, he probably lived at one of the London Receiving Offices, where post was held until picked up.

[29] This refers, I believe, not to John Morgan, but to James Gillman, who had requested C's assistance with his entry for the Royal College of Surgeons Jacksonian Essay prize. C, naturally, felt obliged to help his friend and protector. If successful, J G's reputation and professional career would have been significantly enhanced. Work on this project was one of the main causes of delays to the completion of *LS*. (See Long Note 6.)

[30] This refers to the economic slump following the end of the Napoleonic wars.

[31] This is probably the Monday morning meeting referred to in the letter to S C above.

[32] This is not quite as patronising as it sounds. C had dictated *SM*, as he told R H Brabant.. (CL IV 673) His amanuensis was probably John Morgan, whose daily visits were part of the arrangements with Gillman. As C explained, he had been, 'for so many years accustomed to dicta[te] while [Morgan] writes that I cannot compose without him.' (CL IV 630).

[33] The final date for the submission of entries to the Jacksonian Essay prize was 25 Dec.

[34] cf. A very similar account of overwork in the letter to R H Brabant of 5 Dec. 'I work hard, not only for myself, but (as it happened, tho' at an unfortunate period) for others – and day after day I am *at it* from between 9 and 10 to 4

– and that the occasion of the Delays must be gone before New Years' Day – & that my efforts of Perseverance in labor during these Delays are the best possible Pledge that neither from Indolence or Procrastination any are likely to recur in the future – you will not too severely condemn even an error accompanied with such [xxxx] trying self-sacrifice

in my dear Sir

Your obliged Friend

S. T. Coleridge

* * * * *

Long Notes

1: After 'Mudiford': A Chronology 13 November − 5 December 1816

These letters are not easy to understand on a first reading. In them, Coleridge makes reference to a confusing series of meetings, letters and conversations. Readers may find a chronological reconstruction of the relevant three weeks helpful. Conjectural dates are shown in square brackets.

Wednesday 13 or Thursday 14 Nov, C arrives back in Highgate from 'Mudiford'.

[Monday 18 Nov] T C visits C with the printed sheets of *SM*, which had been prepared while C was away. T C passes on S C's suggested title. C makes clear to T C at this meeting that S C's version is unacceptable, and resolves to write a letter to S C about this matter once he has checked the sheets. T C is also there to find out how work on the second 'sermon', later published as *A Lay Sermon* (*LS*) was progressing, and discovers that progress is very slow. In consequence of this meeting, C resolves privately to continue working on *LS* but meanwhile, to give S C material for the first sheets of *The Friend* at the meeting with S C already planned for the following Monday morning, a week later.

[Tuesday 19 Nov] C writes to S C. He explains at some length exactly what is wrong with S C's title and encloses no fewer than three suggested titles of his own, while expressing his 'decided preference' for the third. He also encloses a list of 'Errata and Emendanda' for the text of *SM*.

[Wed 20 Nov] C receives a long-awaited reply to his letter to Bristol, which was likely to have been to Gutch about *BL*. Both letters are lost, but the reply 'throws him out', and his plans are awry. This confirms him in his decision 'get

before dinner and from 7 to 12, nay 1 –afterwards – ever since I returned from the sea-side' (CL IV 691).

ready' what he can of *The Friend* and to hand over enough for S C to start printing.

[Saturday 23 Nov] S C, upset by the tone and content of C's letter ordering changes to title and text, replies by letter, but posts it too late for same day delivery.

The following day, [Sunday morning 24 November] about 8.00 am, C opens the angry letter from S C. C, who is feeling especially sensitive as a result of attacks on him in the press, replies immediately by the 9.00 am post with New Letter No 1, soothing S C but insisting on all the changes he had previously demanded. He tells him about the delays to *LS* and informs him of his decision to hand over some material for *The Friend* so that work can at least start on that.

On Monday morning [25 Nov] S C, having received C's conciliatory letter, visits him as planned, offers to help with the stalled writing of the second sermon by acting as his amanuensis and pleads with him to give him what he has written thus far so that he can keep his workmen busy 'in these hard times'. Presumably they have made peace, but S C has no intention of giving way on the title-pages and, indeed, by the end of the week Saturday 30 November, *SM* is in its final state and ready for distribution.

Later in the same week, or sometime in the following week, T C writes to C, badgering him for copy, and asking if he has received the long-awaited papers (*BL*) from Bristol.

[Week beginning 2 December] C replies to T C in New Letter No 2 informing him that the expected 'papers from Bristol', (the sheets of *BL*) have not yet arrived, and explaining his lack of progress with *LS* by the fact that he has had to help a friend. This 'friend' is almost certainly James Gillman, with whom Coleridge is preparing an entry for a medical essay prize. C emphasises how hard he is working and promises to do better in the future.

2: Thomas Curtis and the Sheppard family

Thomas Curtis, though probably born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, by 1816 lived in Camberwell, three miles south of the City; the Sheppard family lived in 'Duncott', now Duncote, a small village about ten miles south west of Northampton, which is about fifty miles north of London. The link is via the Johnsonian Baptists, a small and distinct sect, which had seceded from the wider Baptist community in the eighteenth century. (See LN3 below.) Throughout the nineteenth century the Sheppard family were closely involved with two Johnsonian Baptist chapels. The first was in Duncote, established in 1815 by Joseph Chettle, the second was North End Chapel in Towcester, an adjacent village, established in 1853, also by Joseph Chettle. The Towcester North End Chapel church-book, which includes the records of Duncote, is the key document establishing the link between T C and the Sheppard's, and

shows that both Matthew Adams and Samuel Howes were baptised on August 17, 1815 by Joseph Chettle and the following day were 'received into the fellowship of the saints Aug 18 1815 By Mr T Curtis, Pastor of the Church of Christ elected together in London'. Note that 'Mr' not 'Reverend' is the normal title for a Baptist Pastor. However, when Eliz. Cripps, 'Was set apart to that Office' on Oct 3 1815, it was by 'the *Revd* Mr Thos Curtis' (My italics). Samuel Shepherd is not pleased and adds a note: 'An objectionable title. S.S.'. We cannot know whether this use of 'Revd.' was at the behest of T C or was a decision of the scribe. The latter seems more likely. (See LN 5 below for more on the 'Reverendization' of T C.) The family tree of the keeper of these letters shows a 'Dr' Thomas Curtis, who was born on 10 May 1787 in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire; died 29 Jan 1859 in USA; married Susannah Reynoldson, born 1791, a sister of John Reynoldson, a key figure in the Johnsonian Baptist community. It seems likely that this is indeed 'our' Thomas Curtis, because there is no other obvious explanation for the presence of two Coleridge letters in the family papers. A further link is via the granddaughter of another brother of John and Susannah Reynoldson, who married Samuel Sheppard of Duncote. Further research into the family history of the Sheppard's may reveal more evidence of their connection with T C.

3: The Johnsonian Baptists and Thomas Curtis

The Johnsonian Baptists were founded by John Johnson, 1706-1791. He and his adherents left their Particular Baptist Church and congregation in Warrington and built a chapel in Stanley Street, Liverpool, opened in 1750, where he remained in charge until his death in 1791. He preached widely, including in Ireland, publishing many pamphlets and volumes propounding his views. They were an exclusive sect and maintained a distance from the wider Baptist community. In time, Samuel Fisher, 'one of the great Fisher clan' of Nottingham, came under Johnson's sway, left his Baptist chapel in Norwich and set up a Johnsonian Baptist chapel in Wisbech. From there, the community spread. His successor, John Reynoldson (1784-1855), founded several churches in the Midlands and one in Bromley, Kent. An offshoot of this community afterwards met 'in London', precise location unconfirmed, but possibly in Camberwell, under the leadership of 'our' Thomas Curtis, 'a very cultured man', who had, it seems, married Susannah (b.1791), the sister of John Reynoldson. This community included a man called Knight, who for reasons which remain obscure, went to work in Towcester. Thus, a link was established between London and Duncote. So, the two 'mother churches' of the Northamptonshire Johnsonian Baptist community were in Wisbech, where Joseph Chettle was baptised and received into the Johnsonian Baptist community by Samuel Fisher, and London, possibly Camberwell, where

Thomas Curtis was Pastor of a Johnsonian Baptist community.[35]

4: Coleridge and Gale & Curtis

Gale & Curtis was established in London in 1809 at 23, Paternoster Row, publishing mainly non-fiction titles. C first dealt with them in 1812 over the proposed republication of *The Friend*. His regular publisher at the time was Longman, but when C approached him about *The Friend*, Longman, 'hung back and croaked woefully about periodical Publications'. Instead, Longman repeated an earlier offer for the copyright of his poems, but Coleridge once again refused it as too low for, 'great as my affection may be for the Angels of Paternoster Row, that sit in the appropriate shape of Cormorants upon the Tree of Knowledge, I am selfish enough to have still greater for S.T.C. and his three little ones (CL III 328)'. C is here echoing *Paradise Lost*: 'Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life,/The middle tree and highest there that grew,/Sat like a cormorant;' (*The Poems of John Milton ,* ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1968 Bk IV, 194-196). In February 1812 Gale & Curtis placed an advertisement in *The Eclectic Review*, announcing an extended second edition of *The Friend*, but C never produced the required new material. However, money had already changed hands. C had delivered the reprints and stamped paper, which he had rescued from the bankrupt printer, John Brown, of Penrith in the Lakes, and had received in exchange £50, and 'as an additional kindness…not as publishers, but in the way of friendship', as he later put it, 'Gale and Curtis offered to dispose of the reprints at 18 shillings a volume' ((CL IV 680). Thus, Coleridge was already in their moral and financial debt, which was why in 1816 he felt he had to offer *The Friend* to them rather than to John Murray. The full story of C's relations with the firm originally known as Gale & Curtis can be traced in the Introductions and Appendixes of the relevant volumes of the Bollingen edition and in the *Collected Letters*.

5: The 'Reverendization' of Thomas Curtis

C's attitude to T C was certainly affected by the gap he increasingly perceived between T C's religious persona and his business conduct. This gap became a favourite target of C's satire. However, whatever his personal shortcomings, TC's religious credentials were not without foundation. In the Baptist tradition one is usually licensed to preach in a particular chapel or community before one is fully ordained as a Pastor, although neither bestows the title of Reverend. On Church-book evidence, it seems certain that T C was indeed ordained as a minister by 1815, probably by John Reynoldson. In any case, by January 1818, C's relations with T C had deteriorated badly. C felt 'cheated and duped by the booksellers…'. He mocks T C's '… Reverendization with all its

[35] For more on the Johnsonian Baptists, see Dawbarn, Robert, "The Johnsonian Baptists," Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society 3.1 (May 1912): 62-64 at http://biblicalstudies.gospelstudies.org.uk/, from which I have taken all the above quotations.

claims and accompaniments [which] cost him one shilling.' The idea of paying for ordination and titles clearly rankled, because he goes on to make the same point about Dr Collier, albeit with a sardonically humorous accumulation of circumstantial detail, '… whose Doctorship could not have cost him less than £5. 6. 7½ (including the double postage from Aberdeen) …'. In the same letter he relates with relish an anecdote about Campbell toasting Buonaparte '*for having shot a bookseller*!' (CL IV 801-02). The following year, C once more returned to this issue of payment and mockingly referred to '…the *Reverend* Thomas Curtis (n.b. *by virtue of a shilling license*) …'. (CL IV 653). By then C regarded TC as a little more than a pious fraud. This obsession with T C's 'Reverendization' is explained partly by C's original belief that in the firm of Gale & Curtis, he had found publishers who were not motivated entirely by business considerations. They were a 'religious house'. It is indeed possible that T C did have to pay a fee for ordination. This does not necessarily invalidate it. However, as C must have known, 'Reverend' is not an official rank but a courtesy title, marking respect. You cannot buy it. In any case, it is more commonly associated with the Anglican Church and is not widely used by Baptists and is frowned upon by some. Nevertheless, C generally used the title on the address sheet of his letters to T C, presumably to show respect, but not when referring to him in the third person, except satirically. Did T C himself encourage the use of the title 'Reverend'? Did he deliberately use it as a device to dupe credulous authors such as C? This seems unlikely. More probably, C's focus on T C's 'Reverendization' reflects not only his sense of betrayal, but anger at his own too willing suspension of disbelief in the first place. This firm turned out to be no different from the other booksellers of Paternoster Row—not 'Angels' but 'Cormorants (See LN 4 and CL III 328)'.

6: *An Essay on Scrofula*

The Jacksonian Prize was founded in 1800 as an annual prize, open only to members of the Royal College of Surgeons, for a dissertation on a practical subject in surgery. It was, and still is, a prestigious competition. J G had won it in 1811 for a work on Hydrophobia, published in 1812 as *A Dissertation on the Bite of a Rabid Animal*. He tried again with a study of Scrofula, The King's Disease, enlisting C's help. They established a four-part plan. C would write the first two sections about the history and status of the disease; J G was to write the last two clinical chapters. C completed his work on these in Mudeford, but it seems that both men got side-tracked into wider philosophical issues. They began jointly on a work, the fragments of which were published posthumously in 1848 as *Hints Towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory Of Life*. C's letter to J G of 10 November indicates the depth of his engagement in this project and the time he was willing to devote to it, even when C was supposed to be writing *LS*. (CL IV 688-90) For C's two chapters of *An Essay on Scrofula* and the *Theory of Life* see SWF I 454-79. See also H.J. Jackson, 'Coleridge on the King's Evil', *Studies in Romanticism* 16.3 (1977), 337-47.

This portrait of 'Mr and Mrs Curtis' was taken by W R Waters, who ran a photographic studio at 7, Bench Street, Dover from 1867 to 1872. They could not be of Thomas Curtis, Coleridge's publisher, if he died in 1859 in the USA, as Sheppard family history indicates and he would have been in his eighties by 1872. It is more likely that they are relations.