

Preface to the Second Edition

This second edition of my 1987 study of Richard Cumberland is almost entirely unrevised. It is not being re-published in order to chart how scholarship in this field has moved on, but to re-present it as a work of its time, still setting out what was then, I judged, arguable and the evidence that sustained what I then concluded. I have made almost no attempt to rethink or re-explore this material; most of my work on Cumberland and his writings was completed in the 1970s.

In 1999 Jon Parkin published *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England: Richard Cumberland's De Legibus Naturae*. This grew from his Cambridge PhD, and placed the man and his single great book more firmly than I had in the world of science and philosophy. Parkin sees an express and deliberate deployment of better science as Cumberland's chief means of undermining Hobbes. He also locates Cumberland's natural law in an unfolding sequence of accounts of the theory, while seeing him as fully engaged in the debates within the Church of England, once the Restoration settlement had abandoned accommodation and took to pondering toleration for those disaffected moderate Presbyterians who had been newly made non-conformists. Aside from this book we have, I think, to thank Parkin most for his editing of the 2005 edition of Maxwell's translation of *De Legibus Naturae*. This splendid volume brings together with all the introductory essays, appendices, comments from the translator and the editor, a helpful Foreword that locates Cumberland in his various contexts. It also clarifies and expands Maxwell's sometimes cursory or confused footnotes. Best of all, it is available online, and is searchable: painstaking efforts to trace particular phrases, or count Cumberland's allusions to specific Biblical passages could now be completed in an afternoon.

The original Latin version of *De Legibus Naturae*, likewise, can be read and searched online. While proof-reading this edition of my own study, I paused over my attempts to find references to Cumberland in

the *Encyclopédie*: protracted endeavour, by 1970s means, had led me to think he cropped up only once. Online, it emerges that he was mentioned seventeen times (often because of his work on Jewish measures and weights, rather than from any respect for *De Legibus Nature*). I have made no attempt to rework this strand of my assessment of Cumberland's dwindling importance in the eighteenth century, since (I judge) these extra data fail to change the narrative. What matters is that current students have at their disposal means of both asking and answering fresh questions which make any book published in the 1980s quaintly old-fashioned. My differences with Parkin over the development of natural law, and the role of sanctions in enforcing it, the claim that utilitarianism might be discernible in the seventeenth century – all these I have left as they were. I hold on to my view that we know too little about Cumberland's life to be sure about the level of his scientific or medical knowledge: is there any proof that he had an orrery? It also seems hard to tie him to the intricacies of hard-line Latitudinarian thinking. But Parkin's book undoubtedly represents accomplished scholarship placing, analysing and evaluating Cumberland for the foreseeable future.

I have made one exception to my decision not to rewrite my book. The exception is the teasingly difficult re-fashioning of references to 'men' in order to make them to relate to 'people'. As a cradle feminist, I am surprised to find how unthinkingly I once wrote without searching for inclusive language. There are, of course, strong steers from the seventeenth-century authors who supply most of the writings I am examining: they said 'men' and thought 'men'. If a writer speaks of a person as possessing 'a wife, children and property', the phrase captures both a perception and a reality. My solution has, of course, been to leave quoted material exactly as it was. Where the prose is mine, I have rewritten and recast almost every sentence which, in 1987, said 'man' and 'men'. The exceptions are those passages where I am offering such a close paraphrase of the original that any shift would, I judge, be distracting. For example: 'man is an animal endowed with reason'. That captures what Cumberland said and thought, so I have let it stand.

I hope readers coming fresh to the study of Cumberland will find the cautious, clever, kindly Christian scholar rewards their serious attention.

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