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Douglas Hedley

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## COLERIDGE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Coleridge's relation to his German contemporaries constitutes the toughest problem in assessing his standing as a thinker. For the last half-century this relationship has been described, ultimately, as parasitic. As a result, Coleridge's contribution to religious thought has been seen primarily in terms of his *poetic* genius. This book revives and deepens the evaluation of Coleridge as a philosophical theologian in his own right. Coleridge had a critical and creative relation to, and kinship with, German thought. Moreover, the principal impulse behind his engagement with that philosophy is traced to the more immediate context of the English Unitarian–Trinitarian controversy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This book re-establishes Coleridge as a philosopher of religion and as a vital source for contemporary theological reflection.

DOUGLAS HEDLEY was educated at the universities of Oxford and Munich. He is a fellow of Clare College and lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Cambridge in the Faculty of Divinity.

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# COLERIDGE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

*Aids to Reflection* and the Mirror of the Spirit

DOUGLAS HEDLEY

*University of Cambridge*



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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK [www.cup.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk)  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA [www.cup.org](http://www.cup.org)  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

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First published 2000

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface 11/12.5pt Baskerville* [CE]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

ISBN 0 521 77035 1 Hardback

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Mind and understanding is, as it were, a diaphanous and  
crystalline globe, or a kind of notional world, which hath some  
reflex image, and correspondent ray, or representation in it, to  
whatsoever is in the true and real world of being.

(Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*,  
vol. ii. p. 517)

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The origins of this book lie in a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich, in 1992 under the supervision of Werner Beierwaltes, a judicious teacher and an inspiring Platonist. I also owe an enormous debt to my friend Jan Rohls of the same university who guided me through my post-doctoral work funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinde, and my fellow ‘Rechtsrohlsianer’ in the Schellingsalon. I am grateful to Siegbert Peetz, Christoph Horn and Philip Clayton, Ralph Häfner, and Martin Mulsow for the help and instruction they gave me in Munich. I was privileged to be able to profit from the teaching of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Dieter Henrich, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Friedo Ricken and Gerd Haeffner.

In Oxford Geoffrey Rowell introduced me to Coleridge and has been supportive ever since. I am grateful to Maurice Wiles, Bob Morgan, and Mark Edwards for their assistance and encouragement. Kenneth Stevenson, Barry Nisbet and Ian Stewart have provided useful aids of late.

I have learnt much from Wayne Hankey, Stephen Clark, Leszek Kolakowski, Michael Allen and the late A. H. Armstrong; from Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, Michael Vater, Christoph Riedweg, Alfred Denker, Edward Booth and John Heywood Thomas.

My references cannot reflect my debt and gratitude to many Coleridge scholars, but I am especially indebted to John Beer. Friedrich Uehlein was also a great source of insight and instruction, and I have learnt much from Graham Davidson, James Engell, Dan Hardy, Colin Gunton, Ann Loades, Heather Jackson, Mary Anne Perkins, Reggie Watters, Dorothy Emmett, and especially George Watson.

I am very grateful to the Cambridge Divinity Faculty, and the enormous stimulus and support which they have provided, especially

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*Acknowledgements*

my alter ego in the ‘philosophy of religion’, James Carleton Paget, Jeremy Morris and George Pattison, Petà Dunstan’s aid in the library and Rosalind Paul’s generous and critical eye. Brian Hebblethwaite, but also Janet Soskice, Nicholas Lash, David Ford, William Horbury, Markus Bockmuehl, Graham Davies, Winrich Löhr, Tim Jenkins, Julius Lipner, Nicholas de Lange, Richard Rex, Philip Dixon, and Toby Jackman. Friends and students have helped me at various stages, and David Grumett, Lewis Owens and Holger Zaborowski deserve a special mention. I am indebted to the Master and Fellows of Clare College for providing such an exciting collegiate environment, and Terry Moore, Dominic Scott and Nicholas Sagovski for aids to reflection.

Sections of the book were read to various conferences and seminars. I am particularly grateful to members of the British Society for the History of Philosophy, especially Sarah Hutton, John Rogers, Stuart Brown, Martin Stone. Victor Nuovo and Neil Hitchin have been both critical and instructive. Basil Mitchell, David Pailin, Roger Trigg, Paul Helm, Richard Swinburne and the members of the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion have all reminded me that ‘natural theology’ is not a museum piece. I am very thankful for the splendid efforts of Kevin Taylor and Jane Wheare at Cambridge University Press.

The Romantics saw the child as the father of the man: Robert Murray SJ has helped me more than I can estimate and Julian Roberts encouraged me to study in Germany. I owe an enormous intellectual debt to Margaret Barker for her inspiration and guidance, and her love of the divine drudgery of scholarship. My aunt Patricia Margaret Wardrop (1941–77) has been an abiding presence.

My boys Clemens and Justin were painfully absent during the final preparation of the manuscript, but they have nevertheless accompanied me. My debt to my parents is inexpressible, and this book is dedicated to them.



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- Aids*      *Aids to Reflection*, edited by John Beer, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1994.
- BL*        *Biographia Literaria*, edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Brinkley   *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Roberta Florence Brinkley, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1955.
- CCS*       *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, edited by John Colmer, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.
- CL*        *Collected Letters*, edited by Earl Leslie Grigg, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–71.
- Coburn    *Inquiring Spirit: A New Presentation of Coleridge from His Published and Unpublished Prose Writings*, edited by Kathleen Coburn, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.
- F*          *The Friend*, two vols., edited by Barbara E. Rooke, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- Lectures*   *Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion*, edited by Lewis Patton and Peter Mann, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Lit. Rem*   *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, 4 vols., London: William Pickering, 1836; New York, 1967.
- Logic*     *Logic*, edited by James Robert de Jager Jackson, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.
- LS*        *Lay Sermons, being 'The Statesman's Manual' and 'A Lay Sermon'*, edited by Reginald James White, Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Marg*     *Marginalia*, edited by George Whalley, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.
- NED*      *Notes on English Divines*, edited by Derwent Coleridge, 2 vols., London: Edward Moxon, 1853.

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<i>Notebooks</i>	<i>The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> , edited by Kathleen Coburn, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955– .
<i>PL</i>	<i>Philosophical Lectures, 1818–19</i> , edited by Kathleen Coburn, London: Pilot Press, 1949.
<i>SW</i>	<i>Shorter Works and Fragments</i> , edited by H. J. and J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols., Princeton University Press, 1995.
<i>TT</i>	<i>Table Talk, recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge and John Taylor Coleridge</i> , edited by Carl Woodring, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990.

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The textual basis of this work is the new excellent critical edition of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* edited by John Beer. This is based upon the corrected edition of 1831 rather than the original 1825 edition. John Beer's critical edition of *Aids to Reflection* is cited as *Aids*. I have excluded all textual history and much of Coleridge's biography in this work because it is dealt with precisely and thoroughly in the extremely rich and informative new edition. References to other Coleridge texts are as far as possible to the Princeton critical edition. I have tried to avoid manuscript references, and if I mention hitherto unpublished material, I refer to journals or books where these materials are quoted and discussed.

For reasons given, this interpretation of *Aids to Reflection* is not meant to be an exhaustive account of Coleridge's thought. In particular I omit considerations about the development of Coleridge's mind. It also seems appropriate to leave to one side discussions of Coleridge's plagiarisms and citations of Schelling in the *Biographia Literaria* and developments in the *Opus Maximum*. I refer the reader to the seminal work by John Beer, Robert Barth S.J. and James Engell on Coleridge's intellectual milieu. John Muirhead's book *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London, 1930) is still excellent on Coleridge's general philosophy. Graham Davidson's *Coleridge's Career* (Basingstoke, 1990) is a powerfully argued vision of Coleridge's intellectual development. Mary Anne Perkins' *Coleridge's Philosophy* (Oxford, 1994) is a full and useful account of the sources and development of the logos concept in Coleridge's projected *Opus Maximum*. Friedrich Uehlein's *Die Manifestation des Selbstbewußtseins* (Hamburg, 1982) is a complex and rigorously argued account of Coleridge's notion of Subjectivity, especially in relation to Schelling.

I do wish to explain something of my reference to, and quotation of, Plotinus and the German Idealists. I use a capital with the term

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'Neoplatonist' in order to emphasise the particular structure of this tradition of thought, including those elements in the philosophy that are not strictly 'Platonic'. Plotinus' writings are usually referred to as the 'Enneads' or 'Nines' because his pupil Porphyry arranged his master's work into six sets of *nine* treatises. It is hence strictly inaccurate to write of 'Ennead VI 8' when one wishes to refer to the individual *Treatise* vi. 8 since this is precisely the eighth treatise in the sixth Ennead. Further, we write Plotinus' *Treatise* vi. 8 (39) and then chapter and verse because this was the *thirty-ninth* treatise which Plotinus composed. Quotations are always taken from A. H. Armstrong's authoritative translation (which fortunately preserves Porphyry's division into nines and sixes). Coleridge's 'Platonism' is roughly Plotinus mediated by the great Renaissance Christian philosopher-theologian Marsilio Ficino. Coleridge's direct interest in Ficino is limited, but Ficino provided the lens through which Plato was perceived by Coleridge: both Christian and Neoplatonic.

The situation with respect to German Idealism is, unfortunately, much less satisfactory than with Plotinus. He is a very difficult and surprisingly technical philosopher, but there are few serious scholarly controversies in Plotinus studies. The German Idealist philosophers, on the contrary, have been subject to very controversial interpretation. Many leading scholars of German Idealism minimise the potent religious component in this philosophy. Coleridge on the contrary, saw the movement as profoundly religious, and I shall explain why this was entirely justified. Schelling, in particular, was largely ignored until after the Second World War when he began to be seen as more than a stage on the way to Hegel. There is a revival of Schelling studies at present but interpretations differ strongly. The critical Schelling edition is in its infancy, and only a small section of Schelling's opus has been translated into English. References to Schelling are to the edition of his son K. F. A. Schelling in fourteen volumes (Stuttgart/Augsburg, 1856–61).