



PREFACE

The Reverend Joseph Coltman, M.A., Perpetual Curate (Vicar) of Beverley Minster, is usually remembered today for his enormous bulk, as shown in the illustrated silhouette on the cover of this book of him riding a 'hobby-horse' velocipede. On the reverse of the silhouette frame is a handwritten note, possibly dating from the 1850s or thereabouts, stating this was "his favourite mode of travel". The note also states: "A few years before the Rev gentleman's death he weighed 37st. 8lbs". It has been said that, presumably after the death of Daniel Lambert (who weighed nearly 53 stone) in 1809, Coltman was the heaviest man in England. According to an undated early Twentieth century article in 'The Criterion' magazine on 'Remarkable East-Riding Characters', "Mr. Coltman is said to have sought to master his obese inclination in early life through constant walking, but without avail". It seems that, when unaided walking became impossible, the velocipede allowed him to keep on the move when he did not want to go in his coach.

It is clear from the silhouette illustration that Coltman's machine was made by coachmaker Denis Johnson of Long Acre, Westminster, who had obtained a patent and was producing a large number of velocipedes in the early part of the year 1819. Joseph Coltman probably obtained one of Johnson's machines at this time. There can be little doubt that it would have had to be specially strengthened to support Coltman's great weight. It is possible that this velocipede is still in existence (the whereabouts of a dozen other Johnson machines are known), but if so the author has so far been unable to locate it. Any reader who thinks he might be able to assist with the quest should please contact the author (via the publishers) immediately!

Colourful stories are told of how Coltman travelled around the town of Beverley on this machine. There are references to his being assisted whilst riding his velocipede by a rope attached to it pulled by a servant. It is said that on one occasion whilst riding he fell into a ditch. It is also recounted that he regularly rode his hobby-horse into and through Beverley Minster itself before services, and was helped from it and up into the pulpit by church officials.

All of these supposed facts have been passed down by word of mouth, and there is very little corroborative evidence, although there is no reason to suppose that they are not basically true. A letter dated 1st November 1955 to a local newspaper from a Mrs. Wilson of Beverley is of particular interest, as it provides a direct family connection to the great man. Mrs. Wilson states her father told her of stories his grandfather used to tell. "He was the small boy who went around with Parson Coltman, helping his Father who was valet and coachman, to place the steps for the Parson to enter or leave his Gig. The boy was squeezed in with the Parson and the coachman sat more or less on the dashboard. My father does not remember being told anything about a rope being used for pulling the dandy, but understood the Parson got around by using his feet on the ground." The 'dandy' (another name for the hobby-horse) was propelled by the rider pushing with his feet on the ground – nearly half a century before cranks and pedals were attached to the front wheel axle to produce the bicycle.

Indirect corroboration of Coltman's problem in getting into his pulpit may come from the Beverley Council Minute Book. An entry for 7th May 1832 refers to Joseph Coltman's request for a reading desk next to the pulpit. Was this

a heartfelt plea on his part, borne of increasing age and infirmity, to allow him to deliver his sermon from a desk at ground floor level, rather than make the difficult ascent into the pulpit?

But this book will make almost no further reference to the Reverend Coltman's physical size. He deserves to be remembered more for the depth of his compassion and caring for his fellow men, for his involvement in the life of Beverley far beyond his role as clergyman in charge of the Minster, and for his very considerable intellect and persuasive ability as a speaker and writer. All of which are well evidenced by the contemporary records.

I am most grateful for the assistance I have received from a number of organisations and individuals in researching this short biography. The staff of the East Riding Archives at The Treasure House, Beverley (especially Helen Clark), at the Hull Central Library, and at the Borthwick Institute, York University, have been particularly helpful. Local historians John Phillips, John Dawson, Martyn Kirby, John Markham, Robert Bracken, William Ross and David Neave have all provided material assistance and encouragement.

Chapter I

Early Life

Joseph Coltman was born on 8th September 1776, probably in Hull. His parents were John and Isabella Coltman. His baptism took place in the parish church of Sculcoates, Hull, the following month on 7th October.

It is said that the wealthy landowning Coltman family originally came from Lincolnshire (there is certainly a strong Lincolnshire connection). The author has not himself carried out any detailed genealogical research, but available information indicates that Joseph's great-grandfather was John Coltman of the parish of St. Martin Ongar in the City of London. His grandfather was Joseph Coltman, again a Londoner - presumably our Joseph was named after him. Our Joseph's father was another John Coltman, who became a merchant in Hull, marrying Isabella Wakefield, daughter of the Reverend Thomas Wakefield. They had seven children (four sons and three daughters), the oldest being Joseph. We know little about his childhood, but there is no reason to suppose it was not a happy one. It would seem that his parents moved north from Hull to Beverley when Joseph was about ten years old, and that he then lived there for most of the rest of his life.

Further uncorroborated family information is to the effect that Joseph Coltman was also descended from Hull's benefactor Sir John Lister, the founder of Lister's Hospital there. Sir John Lister was an Alderman and Member of Parliament for Hull, founding the hospital in 1642 for twelve poor person, six men and six women. As the heir of Mrs. Green (née Lister) Joseph Coltman had the right of nomination of two men and two women.

When he was nearly eleven years old, in June 1787, Joseph became a day-boy (an 'Oppidan') at Charterhouse School, which at that time was based in London. We do not know where he was living, but in any event in April 1792 he became a boarder in Mrs. Tarver's house. Joseph apparently studied for a while under the charismatic Dr. Matthew Raine, who was appointed headmaster in June 1791 (according to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography). On 3rd April 1793, at the age of sixteen-and-a-half, Joseph Coltman went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was elected a Scholar the following year and graduated with a Second Senior Optime B.A. (the second class of the Senate House Examination) in 1798. He was awarded an M.A. in 1802.

According to the online Clergy of the Church of England Database, Coltman married a Mrs. Barrat in November 1802, when he would have been twenty-six years old. However, despite extensive searching the author has found no

further reference to the supposed union. The indications are that this information is probably incorrect, and that Joseph Coltman remained a bachelor throughout his life, but it is impossible to be categorical about this.

Joseph Coltman's first church appointment was as Rector of Sharnford in Leicestershire on 28th February 1799, when he was only twenty-two years old. The patron of the living was George III. The following year, on 13th June, he was appointed Curate of Winceby, Lincolnshire, with a stipend of £25. On 15th June 1800, just two days later, he was ordained Deacon at the Prebendal Church of Buckden, Cambridgeshire. On 1st March 1801 he was ordained a Priest at the same church. On the same day he was appointed Rector of Hameringham with Scrafield, Lincolnshire, where his parents John and Isabella Coltman were the patrons. According to his own statement in legal proceedings in 1816, referred to later, he lived in this parish for about two years, and the parish register reveals that he conducted a wedding there in December 1803. Coltman's statement actually refers to his "residing upon a Living in Lincolnshire", which the author considers must refer to Hameringham with Scrafield where the Coltman family owned both the living and the manor in the Nineteenth century, not to Winceby.

Coltman says that when in Beverley he "always resided in the Parish of Saint Martin and was then in the frequent habit of attending Divine Service" in the Minster church. On 18th August 1806, now aged nearly thirty, Joseph Coltman was appointed as an additional Assistant Curate at Beverley Minster. This was his first official involvement with the church with which he was to be associated for the rest of his life. He was appointed Perpetual Curate (effectively Vicar) of Beverley Minster, at the age of thirty-seven, on 6th December 1813.

In May 1810, whilst he was still only Assistant Curate at the Minster, notices appeared in several local newspapers stating: "The King has been pleased to present the Rev. Joseph Coltman, Master of Arts, to the vicarage of Kirkby-Moorside, in the county and diocese of York, void by the death of the last incumbent". However, a list of vicars for this parish shows Joseph Smyth B.A. as vicar from 4th March 1811 to 11th April 1826, the notice in the local newspapers at the earlier date stating: "The Lord Chancellor has been pleased to present the Rev. Joseph Smyth, A.B. of Kirkby-Knowle, in this county, to the vicarage of Kirkbymoorside, vacant by the death of the Rev. Wm. Coomber". It would appear that Joseph Coltman must for some reason have decided to decline this appointment.

The Beverley Council records contain details of the Bond dated 10th December 1813 in the sum of £1,000 given by Joseph Coltman and William Beverley to secure the proper performance of Coltman's duties. The document required the new incumbent to "personally reside and abide in Beverley aforesaid and personally perform the Duties of the said Curacy without Absence therefrom for any longer time than three months together, or in the whole at several times in one year, except he shall be prevented residing in Beverley aforesaid by actual Illness or Infirmary of Body of himself or wife or child making part of and residing with him as part of his Family, and shall for the Causes aforesaid obtain a Licence in Writing under the Archbishop of York to reside elsewhere".

This was no doubt standard wording as of course (so far as we are aware) Coltman had no wife or child.

His appointment as Perpetual Curate at Beverley automatically it seems terminated Coltman's position as Rector of Hameringham with Scrafield. However, this was reinstated following a further presentation to the post on 4th January 1814 by his mother Isabella Coltman (then a widow) as patron, addressed to the Bishop of Lincoln. This was supported by a testimonial dated 11th February 1814 addressed to the Bishop signed by three clergymen (including the Vicar of St. Mary's, Beverley), stating that Joseph Coltman: "hath been personally known to us for the space of three years last past, hath during that time lived piously soberly and honestly, nor hath he at any time as far as we know & believe held written or taught anything contrary to the doctrine or discipline of the church of England".

Joseph Coltman continued to hold his post as Rector of Hameringham with Scrafield until his death, when on the presentation of his brother Sir Thomas Coltman (then recently appointed a High Court judge) he was succeeded by one of his Assistant Curates at Beverley Minster, the Rev. William Hildyard.

Chapter 2

Beverley Affairs

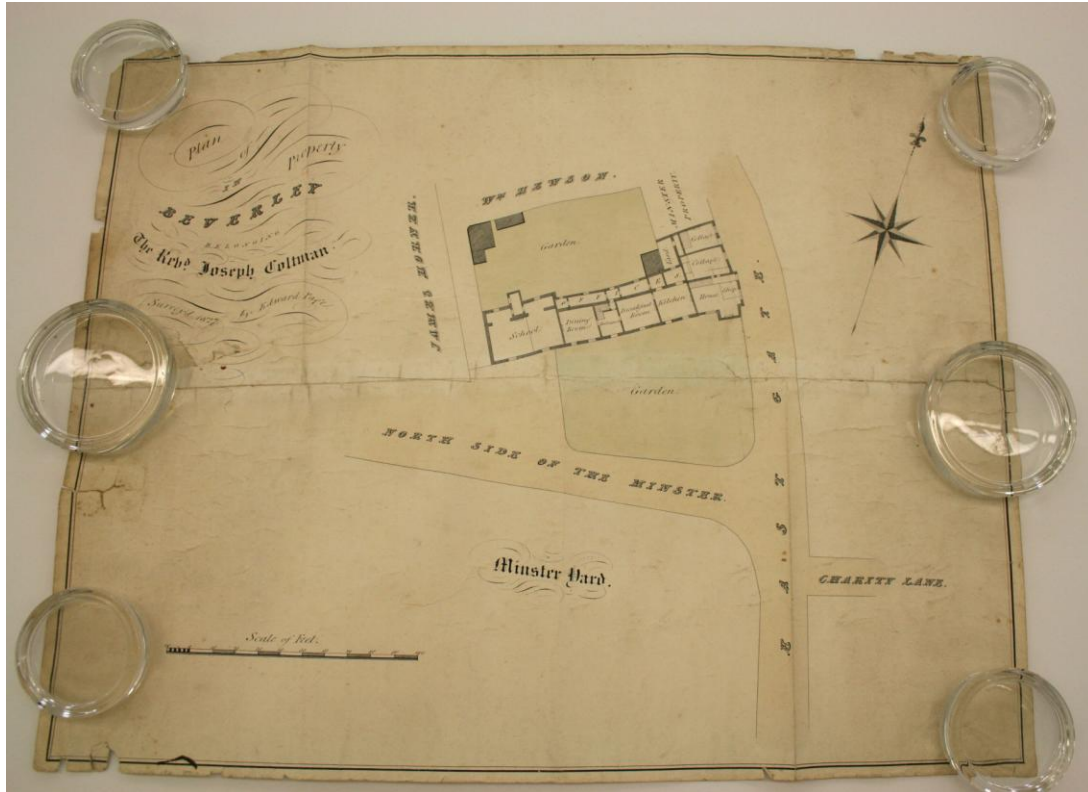
Joseph Coltman's calling was Beverley and its people, and he established himself at the heart of the community. It appears that as Assistant Curate and then Perpetual Curate (Vicar) he lived at more than one address before moving to the Parsonage, north of the Minster Yard. The Beverley Corporation Minute Book contains an entry for 4th December [1815] which reads: "The Rev. J. Coltman to have the house lately occupied by Ald. S. Hall for £735, he to give his answer as soon as possible". An entry for 3rd June 1816 states: "The C.S. [Common Seal] affixed to the Conveyance to the Rev. Joseph Coltman of the house at the North Bar". According to George Robert Armstrong, 1869-1933, (whose 'diary' or notebook on Beverley, has been transcribed and indexed by John Dawson, and published as a CD under the title 'Some Past History of Beverley'),

"Rev. Joseph Coltman previous to residing at the vicarage occupied first house to right hand through the Bar", identified by John Dawson as Amphion House, 2 North Bar Without. It still stands today and is a Grade II listed building.



It is not known how long Joseph Coltman lived at the North Bar address, but in any event by 1825 he was it seems living at the property today known as 'The Old Vicarage', where he remained for the rest of his life. According to 'John Markham's Colourful Characters' (John Markham, Beverley, 1992) the building "needed certain strengthening and widening before it could cope with an occupant of [Rev. Coltman's] dimensions". George Robert Armstrong tells us that these works were carried out by a builder called Montgomery. The current owners of the property Maggie and Tim Wilkinson confirmed this, drawing the author's attention to two timber ceiling beams in the present dining

room, suggesting these may have been installed to strengthen the floor of Joseph Coltman's bedroom above. They also pointed out doorways they thought had been widened to allow him easy access.



The illustrated plan of the property dated 1827 (kindly provided by the Wilkinsons) refers to it as “belonging [to] The Revd. Joseph Coltman”. In his Will Joseph Coltman refers to “That part of the Beverley Minster Parsonage which stands upon my own freehold”, suggesting that part of the property belonged to the Corporation (in trust for the Minster), who had arranged for its original construction by local craftsman Edward Robinson in 1704 (*Beverley Minster: an illustrated history*, published by The Friends of Beverley Minster, 2000). According to the author of an 1830 Beverley guide (referred to below), “The prospect of the minster from the front windows of this house is rich, solemn and inspiring”.

The property is now a Grade II listed building, according to the listing text part of the structure is medieval, the remainder dating from the beginning of the Eighteenth century. The stone Gothic bay on the Southerly front of the building was added in the mid-late Nineteenth century. It seems reasonable to speculate that the early Nineteenth century stable block or coach house, now converted to residential use, may have been built by Joseph Coltman in the mid-1820s when he converted the stable adjoining his house into a school (see below).



Apart from his own residence, Rev. Coltman had other property interests in Beverley. An 1817 terrier (register of land) details the properties he owned in 1817 (TH ref. PE1/842 item 156), and there are details, also at the Treasure House, of a number of sales by him in the 1820s.

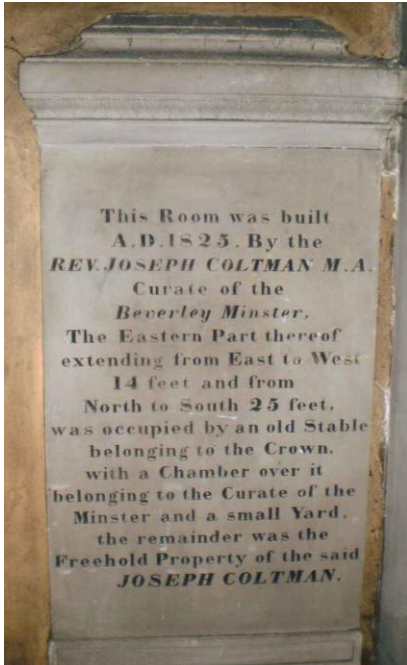
The memorial tablet to Joseph Coltman in Beverley Minster (as to which see the final chapter) includes the words: "Gifted with a peculiar felicity in communicating knowledge, he devoted much of his time and talents to education, training up children in the way they should go, forming the young in Christian principles". In July 1810, when he was still an Assistant Curate at the Minster, the Beverley Corporation made him an Honourary Freeman of the Borough "for the care and attention he has paid to the Charity School".

Several modern writers refer to Coltman as having received this award in connection with the Beverley Blue Coat School, but as this had been established a century earlier this may not be correct. It is perhaps more likely that Coltman was a prime mover in connection with the establishment of the charity schools for boys and girls set up in 1810 as a result of the bequest of several thousand pounds under the Will of a former curate at Beverley Minster (1779-1807), the Rev. James Graves, known as the Graves' Schools. We know from 'An Account of Public Charities in England and Wales' that Joseph Coltman was one of the trustees of Graves Charity for Education in 1827, and he may well have held this position since its inception. But, somewhat surprisingly, the precise reason why Joseph Coltman was made an Honourary Freeman of Beverley remains at present unclear.

From a report in 'The Hull Packet' for 14th July 1812, under the heading 'National Education' we learn that: "At a Meeting of the Gentry and Clergy, holden at Beverley [on 11th June 1812] ... It was Resolved ... That the title of the Society now constituted be 'The East Riding District Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor according to the Principles of the Established Church ... That one School for Boys, and another for Girls, shall be formed at Beverley ... and that other Schools may be formed in other Market Towns or Villages within the said Riding ... That the following Persons be the Officers of this Society ... The Rev. Joseph Coltman, Secretary".

According to J. Lawson's 1959 paper 'Primary Education in East Yorkshire 1560-1902', "the first national school in the area was opened at Beverley, in Minster Moorgate", and "in the late 1820s the National Society increased its efforts and a number of new schools were built in connection with it – at Beverley the minster girls' school adjacent to the vicarage". This would have been the room marked 'School' on the 1827 parsonage plan referred to above. The building still exists as a parish room known as the Peter Harrison Room, and contains a marble wall plaque reading:

This Room was built A.D. 1825. By the REV. JOSEPH COLTMAN M.A. Curate of the Beverley Minster. The Eastern Part thereof extending from East to West 14 feet and from North to South 25 feet, was occupied by an old Stable belonging to the Crown, with a Chamber over it belonging to the Curate of the Minster and a small yard, the remainder was the Freehold Property of the said JOSEPH COLTMAN. Joseph Coltman also "placed in the wall for preservation two dilapidated pieces of the most ancient altar screen of the church" (Oliver's 'History of Beverley', 1829, p.407).



But Joseph Coltman did not rest on his laurels. A report in 'The York Herald' for 17th January 1829, with the heading 'Sunday Schools', informs us:

The Rev. Joseph Coltman, the Rev. W.R. Gilby, and the Clergymen of the Established Church in Beverley, who have so laudably interested themselves in the establishment and encouragement of these valuable institutions, have commenced a regular performance of divine service to the children exclusively, every Sabbath-day morning. The first service was on Sunday last, in the West-end of Beverley Minster, (at the same time divine service was performing in the choir of the Church, to the inhabitants of the parish as is usual). The children of the different schools were brought by their teachers to the Minster, and the service was conducted by the Rev. Joseph Coltman, who preached a most appropriate discourse from Deuteronomy. v. chap. 12 v – "Keep the Sabbath-day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee". The services are to be continued every Sabbath morning. Such praiseworthy conduct is more likely to increase the number of the admirers of our "venerable establishment", than all the violence and prejudice too frequently displayed, against those who differ in their religious creeds. The reference here is obviously to the debate over Catholic emancipation discussed in a later chapter.

In addition to these regular activities, Joseph Coltman is said to have gone to the long-established Beverley Grammar School before breakfast to help boys with their Latin and Greek. Some corroboration of this is to be found in 'The Leeds Mercury' for 28th April 1888 note on Dr. Humphrey Sandwith, the famous Nineteenth century Army physician and author, who served in the Crimean War as Inspector-General of Hospitals. The newspaper states he "was brought up and educated in the Grammar School at Beverley. He ... received some supplementary instruction from the Rev. Joseph Coltman, the Incumbent of the Minster".

But Joseph Coltman's activities in Beverley went well beyond his involvement with education. The Beverley Dispensary (a charity hospital for the sick poor) was established in 1823 and Joseph Coltman became Vice President and one of its Governors. Towards the end of 1831 an argument arose concerning the use of leeches, following a discussion between John Williams of the dispensary and Joseph Coltman at a meeting of the Governors. Mr. Williams said that the practice of providing leeches *out of the dispensary's funds* should be discontinued, and this was agreed at the meeting, but (according to both gentlemen) he did not say that leeches were unnecessary in dispensary practice.

Local surgeon Thomas Sandwith wrote a letter a letter of complaint based on a misunderstanding of what had been said at the meeting. Rev. Coltman wrote a letter dated 2nd December 1831 to John Williams confirming his recollection. He suggested that "in common courtesy, Mr. Sandwith might have communicated with me before publishing, to ascertain whether I acknowledge the correctness of his statement, as far as I am concerned". Apparently, several doctors sent in their resignations following the meeting, taking the view that they could not do justice to their patients, without putting the dispensary to the expense of furnishing leeches.

John Williams wrote a letter the following day to the Governors of the dispensary, taking the strongest objection to Thomas Sandwith's complaint. He added: "I feel greatly indebted to Mr. Coltman, for his permission to bring before the Public *his* impression of the casual remark I made to that effect: this Gentleman is so well know, and so highly respected, that no one, I should suppose, would doubt *his* word, however improperly his name may be made use of on this occasion, as an authority for the erroneous statement so industriously put forth in Mr. Sandwith's extraordinary letter". But any disagreement between Joseph Coltman and Thomas Sandwith seems to have been temporary, as some years later he played a prominent role as mourner at the Rev. Coltman's funeral and received a small legacy under his Will.

Other non-ecclesiastical organisations with which Joseph Coltman was closely associated included being a Magistrate for the East Riding of Yorkshire ("an active and efficient Magistrate" according to a contemporary writer), a Patron of the Hull Musical Festival, a founder member of the East Riding Conservative Association, a member of the Beverley Poor Law Union, a Trustee of Ellinor's Charity and of Charles Wharton's Hospital.

According to George Oliver, in his 'History of Beverley' published in 1829, this latter charity was "instituted for the comfort of poor widows in their declining years ... who receive a weekly stipend of five shillings each, an annual supply of coals, a gown and a petticoat, and five shillings instead of a pair of stays". As the annual income amounted to about £350, this enabled "the trustees to extend the limits of their charity by placing out every year several poor boys apprentice". The following year Rev. Coltman and Rev. Gilby, as trustees under the Will of Charles Wharton, were able to appropriate a surplus of £57 "by which means the indigent have been supplied with flour for the last fortnight, at one shilling per stone ('York Herald', 27th February, 1830).

Joseph Coltman was also as curate at the minster an *ex officio* trustee of Tymperon's Charity, set up under the Will dated 20th November 1723 of William Tymperon, a Beverley apothecary. This provided for the establishment of an almshouse in Beverley to provide accommodation for six poor people. As there were surplus funds from the income of the Manor of Aldbrough (near Beverley) and of other lands in the parish which had belonged to William Tymperon, Rev. Coltman and his co-trustee Rev. William Robinson Gilby of St. John's, Beverley, applied to the Chancery Court for an order extending the terms of the charity (the third trustee, Rev. Nicholas Holme, vicar of Aldbrough, was "advanced in years" and declined to take any part in the proceedings).

The trustees' Petition, allowed on 27th April 1824, asked the Court to permit additional accommodation to be provided at Aldbrough, so that a total of ten poor people could be housed there and in the existing almshouse in Beverley. The requested Order was duly made by the Master of the Rolls on 4th December 1824 (East Riding Archive ref. PE76/48). Although the Beverley almshouse has long ceased to be used as such, it still stands and is occupied as a private residence known as Tymperon House. The charity also still exists as Tymperon's Almshouse Charity, with an almshouse in Aldbrough, occupied by "a needy married couple" (Charity Commission website).

According to Pamela Hopkins ('The History of Beverley: from Earliest Times to the year 2010', p.625), Coltman was also "chaplain of the House of Correction where, until his death, he regularly held services and provided education for the younger prisoners".

The East Riding Quarter Sessions records (ref.QAG/8) show that by 1832 Coltman's assistant curate Rev. William Hildyard was also a chaplain of the House of Correction, for which he received a salary.

Rev. Coltman was a Patron of the Beverley and East Riding Mechanics Institute, formed in 1832. 'The Gentleman's Magazine' for September 1837 makes specific reference to "members of the Mechanics' Institute" attending Joseph Coltman's funeral.

But there was another aspect to Joseph Coltman's personality. In addition to fulfilling his church obligations, and taking a full and active part in local affairs and indeed (as discussed in chapter 4.) in national debates, he was a scholarly individual with a substantial library. In his 'History of Beverley' referred to above, George Oliver states: "The 'Short History of Beverley Minster' [first published 1825], by the Rev. Joseph Coltman, is almost the only publication to which the historian or antiquary can refer with sentiments of unmixed satisfaction; and to this little pamphlet I acknowledge myself indebted for much information respecting the early history of the Minster Church". Later in the preface to his book Oliver states:-

The Rev. Joseph Coltman, with that unostentatious kindness which enhances obligation while it deprecates acknowledgment, voluntarily transmitted a bundle of papers on the subject of Beverley; and not only freely, and without intermission, assisted me with his advice, but

undertook the arduous task of perusing several portions of the manuscript, and gave me the benefit of his suggestions for their improvement. Added to this, he entrusted me with two voluminous ancient manuscripts, one of which has already been noticed; and the other, engrossed on parchment and bound in oak, is "a Chartulary of the chantry of St. Catherine in the Collegiate church of St. John." I have also made use of this gentleman's "Short History", but I am not conscious of having purloined a single extract without prompt acknowledgment.

In 1830, just a year after George Oliver's impressive tome was published, a pamphlet was produced titled 'The Beverley Guide; being a description of the Two beautiful Churches, And whatever is curious about the Town'. The work was addressed "To the Reverend Joseph Coltman, A.M. Rector of Scarfield-cum-Hameringham, Lincolnshire, And Perpetual Curate of the Minster, Beverley, This little volume is dedicated, with Thanks for his kind assistance in furnishing materials, and many other Favours conferred on His most obliged and humble servant, Matthew Turner". The author later states: "It may be right to refer to the resident clergy, with Mr. Coltman at their head as being able supporters of that great and important system of faith and practice which must finally be decisive of our eternal lot; and the luminous pamphlet published by Mr. Coltman on the minster, is a specimen of good taste and kindly feeling which will embalm his memory when ages have rolled over his grave".

Chapter 3

Church Matters and Disputes

Joseph Coltman's involvement in town affairs did not of course prevent him giving full time and attention to his duties and responsibilities at Beverley Minster. It was during his time in office that major renovation works were planned and carried out. A full account is provided at pages 77 and 78 of the authoritative work 'Beverley Minster: An illustrated history' referred to in the previous chapter. The Corporation, who were responsible at that time for the fabric and services, were concerned as to the state of the building, and in 1812 commissioned reports.

In the year 1816 proceedings were brought in the Chancery Court of the Archbishop of York (Borthwick Institute ref. Chanc.CP.1816_2), between James Walker Esquire and the Churchwardens of the Parishes of St. John's and St. Martin's, to establish whether Mr. Walker and his family had the exclusive right to occupy a pew in Beverley Minster. Depositions were taken at the Minster church in October 1816 from witnesses for both parties.

The first witness supporting the Churchwarden's case was the Reverend Joseph Coltman. In his deposition dated 19th October 1816 he referred to the length of his connection with Beverley and the Minster church. He then stated that the choir or chancel was used for divine service on weekdays, whilst the nave or body of the church was employed on Sundays as the choir or chancel was "much too small to accommodate the number of persons attending".

Coltman declared that, with the exception of his own pew as Incumbent, one belonging to the Churchwardens, and two or three occupied by boys belonging to the Free School, the pews in the nave aisles (the central portion of the nave only had benches) "were always regarded as free and open to such of the Parishioners and Inhabitants of the said united Parishes of Saint John and Saint Martin in Beverley aforesaid and others frequenting Divine Service in the said Church as first attended and occupied the same". He added "that some of the said Pews were looked upon as to be particularly occupied, two by Ladies, and one by the Corporation of Beverley, but such Pews were not regarded as belonging exclusively to any particular Lady or Ladies, and the one usually occupied by the Corporation was not exclusively by them but other persons frequenting the said Church sat in the said Pew along with them". Joseph Coltman's views were supported by two of his vergers and other witnesses.

The outcome of these proceedings is not known, but the author doubts whether James Walker's claim was likely to have been substantiated.

In 1823 a scheme was proposed, under which the choir was to become the location for all services, with a consequent major alteration of the seating arrangements. The proposals were opposed by the churchwardens, and Joseph Coltman chaired a meeting of parishioners which resulted in a petition being sent to the Archbishop of York,

listing the scheme's perceived disadvantages – one of which was presumably that the choir “was much too small to accommodate the number of persons attending” on a Sunday. Although this had the effect of delaying the scheme, detailed plans were prepared the following year, with substantial works being carried out in 1826. Several decades later the nave once again became the principal place of worship, as it is today.

It is interesting to read Joseph Coltman's own observations on the works carried out at this time. These are taken from the second (1835) edition of his scholarly booklet 'A Short History of Beverley Minster'. The works apparently commenced in 1813, “and since that time a regular course of repair has been proceeding, on the principle of restoration; which has, in all instances, been inviolably and religiously attended to. Every part of the building to which the reparation has hitherto extended, may be fairly stated to be as nearly as possible restored to the state in which it was originally left”.

Rev. Coltman also refers to the scheme “to take down the pews and galleries in the nave, and to fit up the choir for divine service”. He states this plan was “vigorously opposed” and refers to the petition presented to the Archbishop, requesting him to withhold his consent, which as stated above resulted in further proceedings being temporarily suspended. However, a proposal to remove an early Eighteenth century Grecian-style wooden altar screen, and restore the original altar piece, met with Joseph Coltman unqualified approval:

Mr. Comins, who carefully examined the mutilated work of the original, took casts of the ornaments and mouldings, and carved an entirely new pinnacle of exquisite beauty. The first stone of the new screen was laid in March, 1825, and the work completed in February, 1826. It certainly exhibits a specimen of the most elaborate carving, and a proof of the superior talent of Mr. Comins in his profession.

On 2nd March 1829 the Corporation authorised improvements to the heating of the choir, whilst “Declining complying with the request of the Rev. Joseph Coltman that there should be an alteration in the seating of the Minster, and that additional seats be provided for children therein”. Coltman was more successful in promoting the interest of the Minster choir. The Beverley Corporation Minutes record on 5th February 1821 “The annual allowance to the Rev. Joseph Coltman for the Minster singers to be increased five guineas. And on 7th May 1832 the Minutes record “that the Minster Committee consult with Coltman with regard to a further allowance for the Minster singers”.

But to return to Joseph Coltman's other activities. A report in 'The York Herald' for 15th September 1827 refers to an Anniversary Meeting on 6th September of the Beverley Auxiliary Bible Society in the Guildhall, Beverley. We are told that:

The Rev. Joseph Coltman, one of the Secretaries, read the report, which, though on the whole was a very interesting document, concluded by an expression of regret, at the diminution of interest, in the town of Beverley. The meeting was then addressed by ... Mr. Charles Dudley, from the Parent Society ... and the Rev. Joseph Coltman. The speeches delivered were calculated to rekindle afresh the dying embers of Christian zeal.

After the meeting, the committee and friends dined together at the Tiger Inn, where a variety of interesting facts were communicated by Mr. Dudley, and other gentlemen; and arrangements were made for establishing, in connection with the society, a Ladies' Auxiliary. The interest excited was very great; and it is hoped, there will in future be no cause of complaint, or want of zeal in promoting the objects of the society. A liberal subscription was received at the doors.

Events then took a strange turn for Joseph Coltman. The Beverley Minster Churchwardens' Book for the parish of St. John contains some wholly unexpected entries. On Easter Monday, 7th April 1828 (the first year for which the book is extant), a General Meeting of the Parishioners was held for the purpose of electing Churchwardens for the ensuing year, with Rev. Joseph Coltman, as Perpetual Curate, in the Chair. No problem seems to have been encountered on this occasion. However, the following year, on Easter Monday 20th April 1829, the meeting for the same purpose was chaired by a parishioner Francis Edwards. On this occasion the Churchwardens' Book records that a unanimous vote of censure was passed on Rev. Coltman “for his Illegal and Tyrannical conduct in the parish church of Saint John in Beverley previous to the Election of the Churchwardens for the said parish of Saint John”. The church records throw no further light on the matter and we are left to speculate what may have occurred. Was the suggestion that Coltman was attempting to put undue pressure on the voters, with a view to getting his favoured candidates elected as churchwardens? Clearly, strong objection must have been taken to his conduct for a vote of censure to be passed.

A few years after the St. John vote of censure, the Churchwardens' Book for that parish contains the following curious entry:

Memorandum. A Church Rate laid in November one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two upon the Parish of Saint Martin in Beverley at one penny in the pound upon the Frontage for the pretended purpose of providing Bread and Wine for the use of the Sacrament but for the real purpose of enabling the Churchwardens of St Martin's to convert the vestry of the Parish Church of Saint John into a Drinking Shop. Present at the laying of the rate – The beastly Joseph Coltman the Per: Curate and President of the Gaming House in Well Lane ... [and] the two parish Churchwardens of Saint Martin's well known in the parish as the vilest of the vile and both drunk every night.

These observations in the St. John Churchwardens' Book jar with our understanding of Joseph Coltman as a reasonable and caring individual, so maybe it was in fact the St. John's Churchwardens who were principally to blame. We know that one of these individuals, the local antiquarian Gillyatt Sumner, was no friend of Joseph Coltman and was apparently the writer of the critical entries in the book – which in a note at the beginning he said belonged to him personally, not to the church. Sumner was a Churchwarden for St. John continuously from 1827 to 1837 (except in 1834).

The comments in the St. John Churchwardens' Book contrast strongly with those in the corresponding book for the parish of St. Martin, the other Beverley Minster parish served by Joseph Coltman. For many years Rev. Coltman chaired meetings the reports of which usually concluded with words such as "Resolved That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Revd Joseph Coltman for his able and impartial conduct in the chair". The report of a meeting held on Thursday 30th September 1819 ended with the words: "Ordered That the Thanks of this Meeting be voted to the Revd Joseph Coltman the Chairman for his readiness at all times to attend to the Interests of the Parish". Interestingly, Joseph Coltman as Incumbent had the right to nominate two Churchwardens each year for the parish of St. Martin, though apparently not for St. John. Presumably the problems in connection with St. John's parish were eventually resolved, for Coltman did not resign following the 1829 censure vote and continued to be a force for the good in the affairs of Beverley.

According to Oliver's 'History of Beverley', in addition to all his other involvements, in the year 1829 Joseph Coltman was joint secretary of the local branch of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and treasurer of a Clerical Fund established in Beverley in 1781 "for the relief of necessitous widows and orphans of clergymen".

Another memorandum in the St. John's Churchwardens Book records that the Churchwardens perambulated the bounds of their parish on Rogation Monday 28th May 1832 "and afterwards Dined together along with the under mentioned Gentlemen at Edward Marr's the George & Dragon in Beverley ... Deputy Mayor, Rev. Joseph Coltman, Rev. William Hildyard, Assistant Curate ...". The note continues: "Toasts etc. proposed by the Deputy Mayor – The King, The Clergy of the Diocese, The Churchwardens of Saint Martin's and Saint John's. This Toast was objected to by Mr. William Plaxton and a Majority of the Company Present upon which the Deputy Mayor proposed as an amendment – the Churchwardens of Saint John's and Saint Martin's which was drunk with applause." The reason for the objection to a toast which included the King and the Clergy of the Diocese is not stated. However, perhaps we should not read too much into this as "The company Dined at half past three & broke up about nine in the evening".

The anniversary of the Church Missionary Society took place in the Guildhall in the summer of 1829 (as reported in 'The Hull Packet' for 9th June of that year). Rev. Joseph Coltman M.A. was in the chair. We are told that "Addresses of a very animating nature were delivered ... the meeting was highly interesting, and fully attended".

On New Year's Eve 1830 Rev. Coltman issued a printed address "To the Inhabitants of the Parish of St. Martin" in connection with the Church of England Visiting Society established in Beverley the previous year, with Coltman as president. He states that "there is little reason to expect that the Society can be of any material use in regard to the temporal wants of the poor", but "in regard to your spiritual concerns, the services which the Society is calculated to render are, unless I am very much mistaken, of a much more extensive and important nature. The view in which I contemplate this Society with the greatest satisfaction is as the organ of communication between the minister and his parishioners". He refers to the inevitable communication difficulties in extensive parishes like Beverley, adding "This difficulty is, in consequence of my personal infirmities, greater in my case than it would be in the instance of a younger and more active minister".

Joseph Coltman sees his problem being to a great degree overcome by the operation of the Society. "The visitors will in some instances supply the place of your minister, in others they will communicate with myself or some of my clerical brethren, and will procure our attendance where it may be desired or likely to be useful". Coltman urges his parishioners to receive the visitors with kindness and gratitude, adding: "I cannot, however, entertain any doubt on the subject when I recollect the kind and cordial manner in which I myself was received by you on occasion of my own visit to you for the purpose of making an enumeration of my parish with the view of establishing this Society". It seems reasonable to surmise that Joseph Coltman may have employed his velocipede when perambulating his parish. In any event he had clearly put much personal time and effort into setting up the new organisation.

Coltman then explains the nature of the Tracts which the visitors will distribute. "I trust they will be found to contain important truths conveyed in a pleasing and interesting manner; to embody all the great and essential particulars of our holy religion, in which all denominations of Christians agree". It is interesting to read that the reception Joseph Coltman received when visiting his parishioners was not so different from what we would expect today, in our supposedly more materialistic society. "It is a matter of painful reflection to me that I found (on occasion of my late visit to your houses) so many families where an habitual indifference to the ordinances to religion, and a neglect of the duties of the Sabbath, seemed to prevail to an extent which I was little prepared to expect. It is some consolation to me, that even persons to whom the description applies received with satisfaction the intelligence of the proposed plan of supplying them with religious Tracts".

Joseph Coltman concludes his address: "You will, I trust, give me credit for sincerity in the assertion with which I shall conclude, that to be an instrument, however humble, in the promotion of this great object, would give me a satisfaction, compared with which every other satisfaction is weak and inconsiderable, inasmuch as I have no object nearer my heart than your eternal salvation. With these sentiments I subscribe myself, with all Christian simplicity, Your most affectionate Minister and Servant, Jos. Coltman".

The established Church was under attack from protestant dissenters and others during the reign of William IV. The fight back could be seen as having started with the Oxford Movement, dating from a memorable sermon preached by John Keeble in Oxford on 14th July 1833. However, the clergy of the Archdeaconry of the East Riding considered that their own voice should also be heard, and a meeting was convened and held at Beverley on 16th January 1834, attended by about fifty clergymen. The proposal was that a supportive address should be sent to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, which would make reference to some ecclesiastical changes considered to be required.

The proceedings were printed and published in London under the heading 'Speeches, of the Rev. Joseph Coltman, the Rev. John Scott and the Rev. John King, at a meeting of clergy'. The proposer of the motion was Joseph Coltman, who addressed the meeting at some length. At an early stage he addressed the question "why not rest satisfied with what has been called the Oxford Address?". His reply was perhaps what we might expect, knowing his lively and independent spirit:

My answer to this objection is, in the first place, that I do not like signing addresses which have been prepared without my knowledge and participation, and sent down merely for signature. I do not like to be a mere parrot, to repeat words which I have been taught. It appears to me advisable that each set of addresses should express their own sentiments in their own language. To my mind this mode of proceeding seems to carry with it much more weight and authority. But, independently of this consideration, I must confess that the Oxford Address does not fully meet my views and wishes, and sufficiently explain my sentiments. It is indefinite and indistinct. It expresses little more than devoted attachment to the Church.

Joseph Coltman had his own ideas for the reform of certain Church practices (which were agreed and added to by the seconder of the motion the Rev. John Scott), although these were not specifically referred to in the address to the Archbishops. His concerns were with regard to the oath to be taken by Churchwardens, the revision of the Canons, the internal discipline of the Church, the removal of "immoral and scandalous" Parish Clerks, the shortening of the Morning Service, the modification of the Athanasian Creed, and other matters. Rev. Coltman draws a distinction between the external and internal concerns of the Church, "its temporal or its spiritual claims and privileges". He acknowledges "the right of the Civil Legislature to interfere in the regulation of the external concerns of the Church", but so far as internal matters are concerned he upholds the claim for the Clergy "acting through their proper and peculiar representatives, the sole and exclusive jurisdiction and regulation".

The motion for the adoption of the Addresses was put to the Meeting and carried *nem com*. We are told that "Upwards of fifty signatures have been affixed to the Addresses".

Presumably the two Primates were pleased to receive this support, but what practical results ensued is not known.

The arguments between the two Beverley Minster parishes of St. John and St. Martin were still continuing in 1835. A difference arose as to who should be appointed as sexton, effectively caretaker of the church. The Beverley Corporation records contain a minute for 3rd August 1835 reading: "Mr. James Comins to be appointed ("with the consent of Mr. Coltman") to clean the inside of the Minster, leads and Minster Yard until the dispute between the parishes of St. Martin and St. John, relative to the appointment of a sexton is legally decided". Presumably James Comins was a relative of William Comins, the skilled restorer of the altar screen, and clerk at works at the Minster from 1812 until his death in 1838 ('Beverley Minster: an illustrated history', p.77).

An interesting item appears in 'The Hull Packet' for 20th November 1835, under the heading 'The Wesleyans and the Church', confirming that, despite being a staunch Anglican, Joseph Coltman had ecumenical leanings. Septimus Ramsay tells the story, having "lived many years in Beverley, and had the honour (for such I consider it) of being curate to the truly respectable gentleman, the Rev. Joseph Coltman (incumbent of the Minster) ... His Grace, the Archbishop of York, ever ready to further the views of those who wish to promote the interests of the church, gave his permission to the Beverley clergy to do duty in the largest [Wesleyan] chapel; and two of the clergy, both county magistrates, and who rank high in the estimation of their brethren, the Rev. Joseph Coltman, and the Rev. W.R. Gilby, preached regularly for a long time".

According to George Edward Armstrong, in 'Some Past History of Beverley', a certain Mr. Bruce "was a Methodist Local preacher and had heard Wesley preach in this neighbourhood. When in after years he (Bruce) came to preach in Beverley he occasionally took tea with Coltman at Minster Vicarage". You can't get much more ecumenical than that!

On 15th March 1837 Joseph Coltman had a statement printed addressed to the Beverley Charity Trustees, concerning the Queen Elizabeth's Fund. He referred to an "Act of Parliament passed in the year 1806, commonly called the Minster Act". This recited "That Queen Elizabeth, in the 21st year of her reign, granted to the Mayor, Governors, and Burgesses of Beverley, certain Chauntries, Lands, &c., for the maintenance and reparation of the Fabric of the late Collegiate Church of St. John, of Beverley, for ever".

Coltman's concern on the part of himself and his fellow trustees was that, during seventeen years prior to 1806, more than two-thirds of the expenditure appeared to have been unauthorised under the relevant statutory provisions. He comments: "There are other Gentlemen however, much more competent than myself to form a correct opinion on the subject, and I may very likely take a mistaken view of it". However, he suggests that if his view turns out to be correct, the best course would be to apply to the Court of Chancery to make an order rectifying the situation.

Joseph Coltman's written submission was made "As it is very inconvenient for me to attend Night Meetings", perhaps an indication of his increasing infirmity at this date.

Chapter 4

Campaigns and Causes

On Wednesday, 15th November, 1820, Joseph Coltman distributed a handbill addressed “To the Inhabitants of Beverley”. The background to this was that Queen Caroline, the estranged wife of George IV, had been the subject of a Pains and Penalties Bill which had been before the House of Lords. The purpose of the Bill was to provide the King with a divorce, and to abolish Caroline’s title of Queen Consort. Although when the matter was put to a vote on the third reading there was a majority in favour, a proposal was made that as the vote was so close (107 to 100) the whole matter should be put back six months, and this was passed. The Queen was very popular in the country, and a number of places, including Beverley, had presented her with Loyal Addresses. When in November, 1820, the result of the House of Lords deliberations became known, this was regarded as a clear victory for Caroline, and indeed the matter was not pursued further. Celebrations occurred in many places throughout the realm.

But as we have already seen Joseph Coltman was not a man to follow the crowd, he preferred to make up his own mind. His handbill, distributed during the early part of the day on which celebrations were to take place in Beverley, stated he had given the matter “the most mature deliberation ... with an anxious desire to find reason to think the Charges against Her Majesty unfounded”. However, he had arrived at the conclusion that he could not “join in an act professedly in honour of a Person who has, in my judgment, deeply degraded herself”. He added “I dictate to no one else – I merely claim for myself the right of thinking and acting according to the dictates of my judgment and conscience.” Presumably he had in mind particularly Caroline’s flagrant adulterous association in Italy with her handsome servant Bartolomeo Pergami. Coltman’s leaflet concludes “if any one amongst you had a Wife, or Daughter, or Sister resembling her, you would consider it as the greatest disgrace and severe misfortune to which you could be exposed”.

It seems that on this occasion Joseph Coltman’s words had little effect. The proceedings “in celebration of the decisive victory obtained by Her Majesty the Queen over her inveterate and malignant enemies” took place as planned, and indeed peals of bells were rung from both his own Beverley Minster and St. Mary’s Church in the town. According to a report in the *York Herald* for 18th November, 1820, almost everyone in the town took part, with the exception only of two named individuals and four clergymen, one of whom was of course the Reverend Joseph Coltman. The report refers to his handbill “but having originated with a pillar of the church, it requires no comment”.

A few years later, in 1824, the Perpetual Curate became involved in the campaign to abolish slavery. “On Thursday, Feb. 26th, 1824, at Twelve o’clock, a numerous meeting of the Clergy, Gentry, and other Inhabitants of the town of BEVERLEY, took place in the Town-Hall, in consequence of a summons from the Right Worshipful the Mayor, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning Parliament to adopt such measures for the improvement of the condition of the Slaves in the West-Indian Colonies, as may speedily prepare them for final emancipation.” At the meeting William Beverley Esq. proposed the adoption of the Petition, which was seconded by Rev. Joseph Coltman who spoke eloquently on the subject. His speech includes the following passage:

But after every allowance is made, there are still certain acknowledged and authentic facts which are totally inconsistent with the notion that the Slaves enjoy any thing that deserves to be called happiness. They are driven to their work like cattle by the whip; they are within certain limits liable to be punished at the discretion of their master, without any distinction of age or sex; they are chattel property, and are bought and sold like sheep and oxen with us; if the marriage ceremony is known amongst them, its virtue is unknown; and husband and wife, parent and child, may be separated and torn asunder by the caprice or necessities of their master.

And now, Sir, can it be seriously asserted that these are the elements of social happiness? Can it be maintained that they can possibly be co-existent with it? – impossible. Indeed, after all, what is the nature of the happiness enjoyed by the Negroes? Is it anything more than the happiness of beasts, the relief of mere animal wants, the indulgence of mere animal appetite? They

are fed, they are sheltered from the weather: but is this what constitutes the proper happiness of man? Is this any more than we provide for our horses, our dogs, and our cattle? And on the same principle as operates in the case of these unfortunate beings, not for their sake, but to render them subservient to our use.

And in looking forward to this final result [the abolition of slavery], and pressing temperately, but firmly, for those measures which may lead to it, we are, I conceive, acting in accordance with the religion which we profess. For as long as we find such passages as this in the sacred volume, 'Thou shalt do unto others as thou wouldest they should do unto thee', so long we must consider Christianity at war with the principle and practice of Slavery.

Following a successful conclusion of the Town Hall meeting, the following Wednesday, 3rd March, the inaugural meeting of the Beverley Anti-Slavery Association took place in the Guild Hall, with William Beverley being appointed President and Rev. Coltman as joint Secretary with Mr. Myers. The primary resolution was: "That the intention of the Beverley Anti-Slavery Association, is to further the objects of the London Parent Society, for the promotion of those means most likely to bring about the gradual Abolition of Slavery in His Majesty's West-Indian Colonies". Nine years later the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 was passed, coming into force the following year.

Although a staunch Anglican, Joseph Coltman was in favour of Catholic emancipation. Matters came to a head at the beginning of March 1829, when the reverend gentleman felt sufficiently strongly about the issue to have printed and published an address to 'Fellow Christians, Brother Protestants, Countrymen, & Townsmen'. There was strong opposition from many people, including clergymen, to giving Catholics the right to stand for and enter Parliament, the fear being that they might eventually take over control of the country. Indeed, the Beverley Corporation petitioned Parliament on no less than nine occasions against granting rights to Roman Catholics ('Beverley Minster: an illustrated history', at page 78). But Coltman would have none of this, despite the religious differences between the two branches of Christianity. "May not a man be a kind neighbour, a good citizen, a loyal subject, and yet entertain many erroneous notions in Religious matters? ... In the eye of passion and prejudice, the inference to which they would conduct you may seem legitimately drawn, and to rest on solid argument; but when tried by the standard of truth, what is it but a false conclusion, built on insufficient premises. ... Nor can I resist the impulse which I feel to unmask the artifices of delusion which are put in practice, and by every means in my power promote the success of a cause, which I am conscientiously convinced, is the cause of Justice, of Policy, of Christian Charity, of rational Liberty, of Humanity, and of Religion."

The following day, 4th March, a printed reply was published by "A Protestant FREEMAN of Beverley", who whilst anonymous was it seems known to Rev. Coltman. This dwelt largely on the historical errors and excesses of Popery, and did not acknowledge that Catholics should have any political rights. The pamphlet refers to "the Petition [against emancipation] signed by almost every clergyman of your own district, at a public meeting, called for the purpose". The Protestant Freeman concludes: "In your address, you have laid yourself open to some censure; but I have a respect for you, notwithstanding (what I think) your erroneous opinions, and I forbear further to comment upon it – but I would advise you to consider, that he who throws stones, may have them returned upon himself; and a less friendly adversary than myself, might have caused you some uneasiness. In conclusion, I will add, that although I think you mean well, you do not always judge well."

But this did not cause Joseph Coltman to change his opinion. The following day, he spoke at some length at "a Meeting of the Gentry, Clergy and other Inhabitants of Beverley and the Neighbourhood", called "for the purpose of considering the propriety of Petitioning both Houses to effect a conciliatory adjustment of the Catholic Claims". He commenced: "I shall take the liberty of addressing a few observations to you, explanatory of my sentiments on this very important Question, and the reasons on which my opinion is formed. I could have wished to have avoided the discussion of it altogether, both on public and private grounds. I could have wished to leave the matter to the wisdom of Parliament, unfettered by Petitions on one side or the other. I was unwilling to increase the ferment and agitation which have been so unnecessarily excited in the public mind." He then makes some general observations with regard to the involvement of clergymen in politics, which are still of relevance today:

In my opinion, it little becomes the clerical character to intermix in Politics and Political discussions. There are however, you must feel occasions which justify and impose a different line of conduct. ... There are, Gentlemen, two especial cases where a Clergyman is warranted in attending meetings of this kind – when Religion, whether with reason or not, is mixed up with Politics; and when the Question is of such overwhelming importance, as that its decision will influence the

happiness and prosperity of his Country, in its great and leading interests. In my judgment, both these particulars combine in the present instance.

On the substantive issue, Rev. Coltman states his view that: "If the prayer of the exclusionists be acceded to, the consequence must be a convulsion of the most frightful character, terminating in scenes of devastation and bloodshed, which no man possessing the common sensibilities of our nature can contemplate without dismay." But his principal concern is the unfairness of the situation. "Is it not monstrous, Gentlemen, in a representative Government, that two-thirds of the community should abrogate to themselves the power of legislating for the whole, of imposing taxes upon the whole, to the exclusion of the remaining third, containing its full proportion of talent, intelligence, wealth, loyalty, love of order, quiet submission to law, public and private virtue; every thing, in short, which can constitute respectability and worth. Is not this, I ask, a monstrous state of things? ... If, Gentlemen, you agree with me in thinking this the real Question at issue, you will hasten along with myself and the other advocates of peace, order, union and charity, to affix your signatures to the Petition which I hold in my hand, founded as it is upon these sentiments, and urging Parliament to complete the holy work of conciliation which they have begun."

The printed report of the meeting concludes: "The impression which this eloquent address made upon the feelings of the auditors, amongst whom were some of the most distinguished personages of the town and neighbourhood, was evidently manifested by the bursts of applause which almost incessantly resounded in the hall; and the Reverend Gentleman sat down greeted by the cheers of the friends to the measures which had been so ably advocated. The Petitions have already received a great number of signatures."

Although an apparently much larger meeting had taken place in Beverley, addressed by one of Coltman's Assistant Curates, the Rev. William Hildyard, the pro-Catholic lobby won the day. The Catholic Relief Act 1829, permitting members of the Catholic Church to sit in Parliament, was passed by Parliament on 24th March, and received Royal Assent on 13th April 1829.

Chapter 5

Journey's End

Joseph Coltman died on Monday 19th June 1837. The circumstances surrounding his death are not entirely clear. The 'Hull Packet' for 23rd June 1837 just states that Coltman's death took place "on Monday morning last, at his house in Beverley, to the inexpressible grief of those who knew and loved him, and to the irreparable loss of all classes of society in this neighbourhood". Had he survived for a few more days the cause of his death would have been stated in his death certificate, civil registration of births, marriages and deaths coming into force on 1st July 1837. No post mortem examination or inquest appears to have been held. Robert Bracken, writing in the Friends of Beverley Minster Annual Report for 2008/9, states that Coltman "suffocated, because the manservant, employed to stay in his room overnight to turn him in bed, fell asleep", adding "the story may well be anecdotal, but it has the ring of truth about it".

The odd thing is that the reverend gentleman's Will is dated 18th June 1837, the day before he died. The wording of the document suggests that it was drawn up by a lawyer. The testator's signature is well-written and clear, and the document has three witnesses. It seems a strange coincidence that Joseph Coltman should have suffered an accidental death (if this is what it was) within just twenty-four hours of having made his Will.

to my youngest female servant, Mrs
 Givens - to my son, John, my Groom,
 Tom, Lundy and to his son, Richard, Lundy
 Tom, Lundy.

That part of the Beverley
 Minster Rectorage which stands upon my
 own freehold I am desirous shall be given
 to my Successor of such reasonable Term as
 my Brother Sir Thomas Coltman may think
 proper. I give to my Brother one copy
 of every Clippical Book in my Library -
 also Colman's Bible - Colman's Dictionary of
 the Bible - Henry's History of the Church
 and such other Books as he may think
 proper to take. All the rest of my Books
 I wish to be given to the Trustees of
 Kingston College on such reasonable terms
 as my Brother may think it right to
 propose. And subject to the payment
 of all my just debts and funeral expences
 and the several legacies and annuities
 herebefore bequeathed I do hereby give
 devise and bequeath all and every my
 meysage lands tenements hereditaments
 and real Estate of what nature or tenure
 devise and whatsoever it shall be and all the
 residue of my movables ornaments for money
 plate linen household furniture goods chattels
 and personal Estate and effects whatsoever
 and whatsoever unto my Brother the said
 Sir Thomas Coltman his heirs executors
 administrators and assigns for his and their
 own use and benefit. And I do hereby
 constitute and appoint him my said
 Brother the Executor of this my Will.

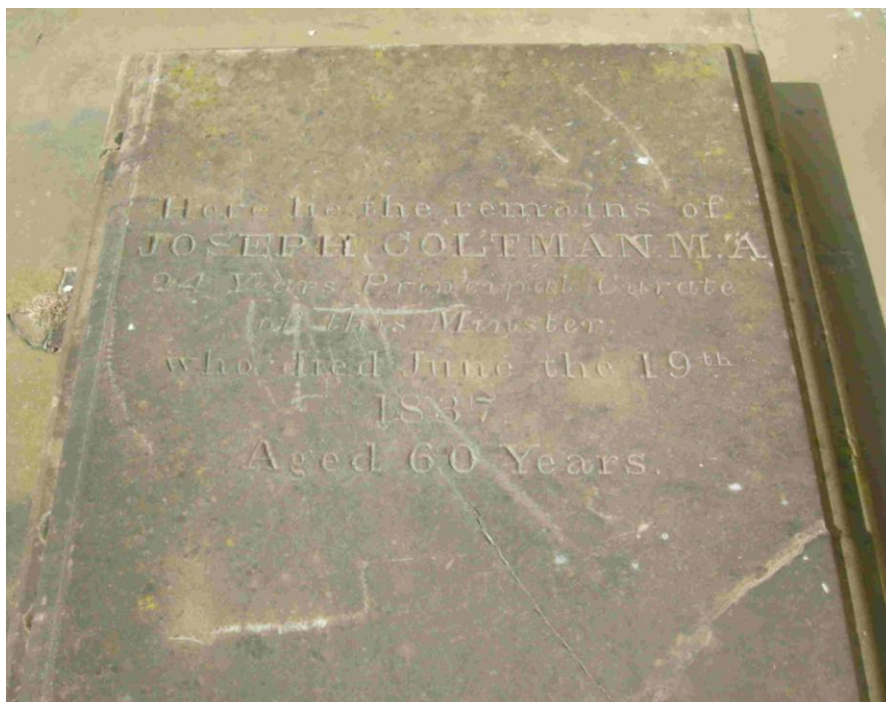
In Witness whereof I the said
 Joseph Coltman have hereunto set my
 hand and seal the day and year first
 above writt.

Joseph Coltman
 Signed sealed in his
 and declared to the said
 Joseph Coltman the Testator
 as and for his last Will
 and Testament in the
 presence of us who in his
 presence at his request and
 in the presence of each other
 have hereunto subscribed our
 names as Witnesses

Joseph Alderson
 Wm. Stephenson

Coltman's funeral took place in Beverley on 23rd June, the event being briefly recorded in the 'Hull Advertiser' a week later. The report commences: "The funeral of the Rev. Joseph Coltman, of Beverley, took place on Friday morning about eleven o'clock." The funeral was conducted by one of the assistant curates of the minster, the Rev. James Eyre. The newspaper report concludes: "All the shops and almost every house had their windows closed till the conclusion of the ceremony. The corpse was preceded to the grave by Dr. Alderson, and Thomas Sandwith Esq., surgeon. It was followed by Sir Thomas Coltman, as chief mourner, by the domestics of the deceased, by the neighbouring clergy, and all the respectability of the town". According to George Robert Armstrong, "a stone truck [was] used to convey his body from the vicarage to the minster. The coffin was lowered into the grave with tackle and poles. ... Above told me by eye witness."

Coltman was buried near the church wall in the Beverley Minster graveyard. His tombstone reads simply: "Here lie the remains of JOSEPH COLTMAN M.A. 24 Years Principal Curate of this Minster, who died June the 19th 1837 Aged 60 Years." His burial is recorded in the Burial Register of St. John and St. Martin, Beverley.



Coltman's Will (see Appendix 2.) appointed his brother Sir Thomas Coltman as his sole executor. He gave a few pecuniary legacies (the principal one being the sum of £200 to his cousin William Joseph Coltman). His six servants were either given modest annuities or small cash legacies. He gave the residue of his estate to his brother.

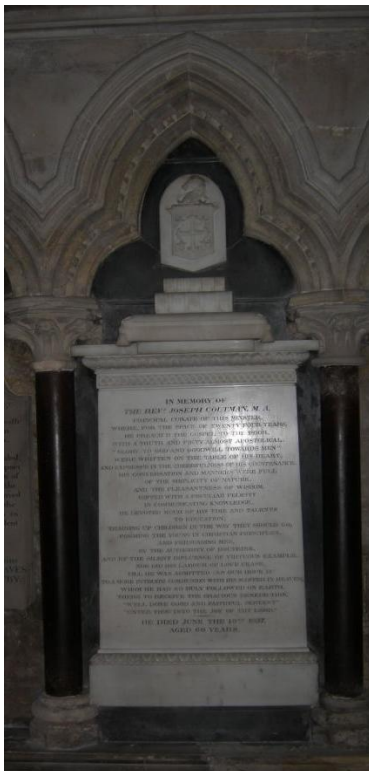
Despite making this absolute gift of the whole of the residue of his estate to his brother, Joseph Coltman requested that the Beverley Minster Parsonage be offered to his successor on such terms as his brother might think appropriate. He gave his brother all his books (specifically mentioning three of them), requesting that after his brother had chosen the books he wanted to keep, the remainder should be offered to the Trustees of Kingston College, again on such terms as Thomas Coltman might consider appropriate.

An undated article on Rev. Coltman in 'The Criterion' (referred to in the Preface), quoting from "the interesting historical account of the Hull Subscription Library given in the recently issued catalogue of that institution" provides further details of the library bequest:

The largest gift ever made to the Library was that of the 'Coltman Collection'. The Rev. Joseph Coltman, of Beverley, so well known for his urbanity, scholarship, and immense bulk, bequeathed his library to the Kingston College. When that institution ceased to exist, R. Bethell, Esq., and the other proprietors of the College suggested that the books should be given to the Library. The executors assented to the proposal, and thus the Library had at once 2202 volumes added to its stores, 520 of which were works of Scholarship. The Hull Subscription Library itself closed in 1970 and its then remaining books were apparently sold by auction in 1975.

Coltman's Will was proved in the Province of York on 15th August 1837, with "the whole of the goods Chattels and Credits of which the said deceased died possessed within the Province of York" being stated not to total the sum of £5000. We are not given the actual probate valuation of Joseph Coltman's personal effects (not including freehold property), but in today's money this maximum sum would be equivalent to something like half-a-million pounds. An online index entry refers to "... wine, and other effects, of the late Rev. Joseph Coltman, to be sold by auction ...", but frustratingly no other information is available. In any event, it seems reasonable to assume that he was comfortably placed financially at the time of his death.

Two years after Coltman's death, an impressive wall tablet, produced and signed by the Beverley monumental mason Thomas Hayes, was erected in the north aisle of the nave of Beverley Minster, where it can still be seen.



It reads:

In memory of the Revd. Joseph Coltman, M.A. Principal Curate of this Minster, where, for the space of twenty four years, he preach'd the Gospel to the poor, with a truth and piety almost apostolical, "Glory to God and goodwill towards men", were written on the tablet of his heart, and expressed in the cheerfulness of his countenance. His conversation and manners were full of the simplicity of nature, and the pleasantness of wisdom. Gifted with a peculiar felicity in communicating knowledge, he devoted much of his time and talents to education, training up children in the way they should go, forming the young in Christian principles, and persuading men, in the authority of doctrine, and by the silent influence of virtuous example. Nor did his labour of love cease, till he was admitted (as our hope is) to a more intimate communion with his Master in Heaven, whom he had so duly followed on Earth, there to receive the gracious benediction, "Well done good and faithful servant" "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." **He died June the 19th. 1837, aged 60 years.**

A colossal achievement by any standards.

