

Benjamin Woodroffe of the Greek College

By A.H. BARRETT

SUMMARY

After the dissolution of the monasteries, Gloucester College, a Benedictine training house at Oxford, was converted into a hall of residence, and flourished for a time as Gloucester Hall. By the late 17th century, however, it had become almost devoid of undergraduates, and its buildings had fallen into disuse and disrepair. In 1692, a new Principal was appointed: Benjamin Woodroffe, a Canon of Christ Church. Woodroffe had been a court cleric, chaplain to Charles II, and also Dean of Christ Church for a few days in 1688 until ejected at the Revolution. He enthusiastically set out to restore Gloucester Hall's fortunes and his own. In this he was not entirely successful. His attempts to obtain the Cookes bequest and so turn the Hall into a College narrowly failed; and his project, in collaboration with the Orthodox Church, to educate at the Hall Greek youths from the Levant also foundered. Woodroffe was, however, a man of courage, energy and scholarship, and this article attempts to describe the main episodes of his varied career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Keeper of the University Archives and to the Bodleian Library for permission to quote from manuscript material, including Woodroffe's will; to the British Library for permission to quote from unpublished manuscripts; to the Provost, Vice-Provost and Librarian of Worcester College for much encouragement and for permission to reproduce Woodroffe's portrait; to Mr. Richard Adams for valuable criticism; and to Mr. Laurence Weeks, Assistant Librarian at Worcester College, for constant practical help and informed comment. Mrs. Elizabeth Aydon kindly typed the text.

EARLY LIFE: CHRIST CHURCH

One of the odder episodes in the history of Gloucester Hall is the brief period of its use as an establishment for the education of Greek youths, immediately before its transformation into Worcester College in 1714. At this time the head of the house was Benjamin Woodroffe, Principal of Gloucester Hall from 1692 to 1711.

The 'Greek College' has been extensively discussed by Daniel and Barker in their *History of Worcester College* (1900),¹ and by E.D. Tappe in an article in *Oxoniensia* in 1954.² Contemporary comments on Woodroffe had been generally uncomplimentary, and both

¹ C.H. Daniel and W.R. Barker, *Worcester College* (1900).

² E.D. Tappe, 'The Greek College at Oxford, 1699-1705', *Oxoniensia*, xix (1954).

of the above-mentioned works appear, not unreasonably, to accept the view that he was an unpractical eccentric. But there is also evidence that Woodroffe was a remarkably talented man, gifted with enthusiasm and energy; and that even the 'Greek College', to us a bizarre and outlandish venture doomed to failure, was, in its time, a far-sighted and imaginative concept. Moreover, but for Woodroffe, Worcester College itself might never have come into existence; for the buildings narrowly avoided demolition in his predecessor's time, and were inherited by him in a state of almost terminal decay. The life of this complex and unusual man deserves a closer look, for he must surely be held to occupy a prominent place in the gallery of those who have presided over the Hall and the College.

The Woodroffes were a clerical family. Benjamin's father, the Rev. Timothy Woodroffe,³ a graduate of Balliol and Bachelor of Divinity, was a native of Sherston, Wilts., where his father was vicar. He lived to the age of 87, and was father to 14 other children besides Benjamin, who was born in 1638 in Canditch Street, St. Mary Magdalen parish, Oxford, an address described by the antiquary Anthony Wood as 'over against the [Sheldonian] Theater.'⁴ Benjamin Woodroffe⁵ was at Westminster School under its redoubtable headmaster, Dr. Busby, and from there went to Christ Church in 1656. He became M.A. in 1662, took holy orders, was incorporated at Cambridge in 1664 – a move perhaps calculated to assist academic and church preferment – and became D.D. in 1672. However, as will appear later, his studies were by no means confined to the Classics and Theology. Having become a Student and Tutor of Christ Church, he had as pupils the sons of many titled families, among them Theophilus Hastings, later to become 7th Earl of Huntingdon, and Daniel Finch, whose father, Sir Heneage Finch, was created 1st Earl of Nottingham in 1681.

Woodroffe's correspondence with his aristocratic pupils and their families gives a glimpse of him as a tutor, at first aged no more than 24, and some flavour of Oxford life at the time. In August 1662 Sir Heneage Finch, in a letter to his son, bids him 'present my service to Mr. Woodroffe.' His tone is severe and dignified:

I will not deny you the satisfaction of a journey to Bath, especially in your tutor's company . . . And because your going is like to bring much trouble with it to your tutor, I require you to bear the whole charges of it . . . Mr. Brome Whorwood⁶ hath gotten a small token from mee for you, 'tis such as I had then about mee, a piece of good but light gold. He will offer you great freindship, for having a fair estate & park near Oxford he will invite you to the recreations of it, which I would not have you to accept, by no means. Receive the offer with civility but let your tutor refuse you that liberty.

Relenting slightly, he goes on:

He [Mr. Whorwood] hath undertaken to carry both your tutor and you to the tavern, which 'tis possible he may prevayl in, coming with a token from mee . . .⁷

Woodroffe was soon on excellent terms with the Finch family, for on 2 December 1662 Sir Heneage writes to his son:

I shall be very glad to see you and your tutor at Christmasse, and am well pleased that you care so to contrive your journey that it may be without the loss of any of those publique exercises which are to be performed some before and some after the solemnity . . .

³ A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. Bliss, iii, 1113; Bodl. MS Wood F45.

⁴ A. Wood, *Life and Times*, ed. Clark, ii, 255.

⁵ D.N.B. (Benjamin Woodroffe 1638–1711); J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1500–1714* (1891).

⁶ Brome Whorwood of Holton Park was M.P. for the City of Oxford from 1661–1681.

⁷ Hist. MSS. Comm. 71, *Finch MSS* i, 208.



Benjamin Woodroffe, by an unknown artist. (Ph. J.H. Russell. Original at Worcester College.)

I am very sorry at your tutor's indisposition, but hope it will not be such as to hinder him from bearing you company to Kensington, where he will find a house full of kindness for him and no want of anything, but good company and a library.⁸

A liberal disposition towards Woodroffe continued after the holiday:

I wish you to present your tutor with 5*l.* a quarter, whose paynes I shall not look upon as discharged by any reward which you can give . . . If your tutor would not suffer you to bear his charges, you must find some other way to supply it by a present of greater value . . .⁹

Two months later, Sir Heneage issues a stern warning:

You may discharge your dancing master when you please. I think you did very ill to entertayn him at all in the mornings . . . In the mean time, pray hearken to your tutor's directions . . .¹⁰

Woodroffe himself was equally severe in writing to Lord Huntingdon on the subject of suitable reading matter:

There is at present a book that I cannot recommend to your Lordship, but because everyone reads it, 'tis fit your Lordship should not be ignorant of it; 'tis called the Rehearsal Transposed.¹¹ It hath been stopped from spreading, but 'tis again allowed to be bought.¹²

By 1666, having, according to Finch, obtained a London living, Woodroffe began to spend less time in Oxford. Though Sir Heneage had given him more than a little encouragement in this, writing

I have recommended him to the Bishop of London, whose favor he will be sure to find. I had also recommended him to my Lord of Canterbury, whose promise he had to take care of him,

he nevertheless observes to his son:

His leaving of the University, and having his thoughts absent from it when he is there, will put me upon new counsells for your brothers. I think to have logick and philosophy read to them at home, till I can write to Mr. Dean¹³ for another tutor . . .¹⁴

Despite this, there seems to have been no ill-feeling. Sir Heneage informs his son that:

I have given Mr. Woodroffe leave to choose his successor, which he makes no hast to do, yet cannot stay a week together at Oxford. In the mean time I take payns to help him to his living at London and to prefer him out of the way so that wee may part civilly . . .¹⁵

He even goes so far as to say:

If Dr. Busby intend to leave Westminster school, as I hear and hope, I will labour what I can to establish Mr. Woodroffe for his successor.¹⁶

⁸ Ibid. 229.

⁹ Ibid. 237.

¹⁰ Ibid. 245.

¹¹ An ecclesiastical polemic by Andrew Marvell attacking Samuel Parker, Bishop of Oxford.

¹² Hist. MSS. Comm. 78, *Hastings MSS.* ii, 160.

¹³ Dr. John Fell, Dean of Christ Church from 1660 to 1686.

¹⁴ *Finch MSS.* i, 409.

¹⁵ Ibid. 414.

¹⁶ Ibid. 415.

This plan, however, came to nothing, and Woodroffe, dividing his time and interests between Oxford and the capital, in fact continued as tutor to the two younger Finch boys, despite their father's earlier misgivings.

In addition to his tutorial duties at Christ Church, Woodroffe, after the fashion of the times, pursued a parallel career in the Church. There is a pleasant picture of him as a country vicar in letters he wrote from his living at Shrivenham, Berks., to Sir Robert Southwell,¹⁷ ostensibly to give news of Southwell's nephew, the young Sir Philip Perceval, Bt., aged 18, to whom Woodroffe appears to have been acting as tutor:

Sept. 28th 1675

Yours found me two daies since playing the farmer at Shrivenham, where Sir Philip hath been helping me in with my harvest and contributing to my housekeeping with Hares and a good stomach. He is the perfectest countryman in my Parish and is troubled for nothing so much as that the Vicar hath not another Harvest to bring in: by the time the Cavalier hath rid down the rest of our Hares, the terme at Oxford will call him home from his Knight Errantry, and when the Temple¹⁸ shall call me againe from the Rake & Spade to digg in Divinity, I hope you will allow me the Honour of putting myselfe in the young knight's Retinue to wait upon you & the London terme. In the meantime we'll doe as well as we can att the Milke paile . . .¹⁹

In another letter he shows concern for Sir Philip's studies:

I find my goode friende Sir Philip soe willing to employ his time as he may most improve himselfe that I am very willing that he should be furnish'd with delightfull books as well as usefull, because I think he will give me leave to promise for him that the former shall not exclude the latter, to which intent I think it proper for him to be furnish'd with some very good booke of mapps. The text he will read will be Cluverius,²⁰ but I thinke we must have some larger book for the maps. I know you are very skillful what to send, and if you thinke of a Booke of value it will be a Jewel by him and I hope he will not esteeme it for the Ornament of his Shelves but of his minde. I would likewise have some noble History for him in French, as Davila²¹ or what other you may judge most conducible to the good designs you have for Him. For I have a little French man who will sitt with us after Supper, and so will either attend him in his reading of some such booke, or in his occasional discourses.²²

The tone of these letters is very much of correspondence between equals, although Woodroffe in one instance acknowledges receiving from Southwell

a Bill for fifty pounds . . . and shall speedily give you an account of soe much as we have had reason to dispose of . . .²³

The long-term benefits Woodroffe derived from his aristocratic pupils were, however, in the larger world outside Oxford.

¹⁷ Sir Robert Southwell, 1635–1702, diplomat, principal Secretary of State for Ireland, President of the Royal Society.

¹⁸ Woodroffe was appointed lecturer to the Temple in 1672. In addition, he became sub-dean of Christ Church in 1674 and a canon of Lichfield in 1676.

¹⁹ B.L. Add. MS. 46952, f.175.

²⁰ Philip Cluverius (Cluwer) of Danzig (1580–1623), reputed to be the founder of historical geography.

²¹ Enrico Caterino Davila of Padua, 1576–1631, author of a history of the civil wars in France.

²² B.L. Add. MS 46951A, f.1.

²³ B.L. Add. MS 46952, f.187.

THE COURTIER

It was probably through the influence of Christ Church pupils and their powerful families that Woodroffe became known at Court. By 1669 he had been appointed chaplain to James, Duke of York, brother of Charles II. As James is known to have been received into the Roman Catholic church shortly after this date, and as Woodroffe was never of that persuasion, it seems probable that the chaplaincy was a post that the Duke felt obliged to fill with an Anglican for the sake of appearances. It was, however, by no means a sinecure, for the Duke was Lord High Admiral, and took command of the Fleet when the third Dutch War broke out in 1672. Woodroffe describes in a letter dated 26 April 1672 to his former pupil Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon, 'from aboard the Prince which is now near the buoy in the Nore', how he nearly missed joining his ship:

I lost my passage in Sir A. Apsley's coach, having outstayed my time with your Lordship. However, in the afternoon I arrived timely enough by post at Chatham to save my tide, and got aboard between 9 and 10 at night.²⁴

On 28 May the English fleet, accompanied by a French squadron, attacked a Dutch fleet under de Ruyter; there ensued the indecisive, Jutland-like engagement known as the battle of Southwold, or Sole Bay. Woodroffe later wrote a Latin poem of some 1000 lines describing the battle. He entitled the poem *Somnium Navale*,²⁵ and adopted the rather odd device of treating the events as a dream sequence beginning in St. James's Park. Despite the artificial conventions of its composition, the poem is surprisingly vivid, and full of genuine feeling. Woodroffe was apparently familiar with life at sea, as he shows in a number of footnotes explaining his Latin versions of various nautical terms. One might indeed have guessed that the sailors' three cheers as the fleet set sail could be put into Latin as *cheer hoe ter vociferantes*; but his Latin rendering of such seaman's language as 'lying athwart their hawse', anchor 'a peek' (apeak) or 'home', or 'at the Davids' (davits) might well have been obscure without his careful notes. Later, he describes in graphic terms how the enemy fleet hove in sight, the appearance of their fireships at nightfall, clearing the decks by throwing tables and hammocks overboard, the battle with its dreadful carnage, his ministrations to the wounded and dying, and the abandonment of the action when visibility was reduced to nil. He also reflects on how easily he could have avoided it all by staying at home, observing that although he would have missed the comradeship, he would not have had his future sleep ruined by memories of that day.

During the following years, Woodroffe appears to have spent much time in London and at Court: so much so that in 1677 Humphrey Prideaux, a Christ Church colleague, wrote to John Ellis,²⁶ one of Woodroffe's former pupils:

Your tutor Dr. Woodroffe lives not with us here now [in Oxford] having taken a house at Knightsbridge to be near the Court.²⁷

His cultivation of royalty had brought him further distinction in 1674, when he was appointed Chaplain to King Charles II; and when, in 1685, the Duke of York succeeded his brother as James II, Woodroffe continued in favour. He had as long ago as 1672 been

²⁴ *Hastings MSS.* ii, 157.

²⁵ Benjamin Woodroffe, *Somnium Navale* (Oxford, 1673).

²⁶ John Ellis, 1643?–1738, Under-Secretary of State.

²⁷ *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis* (Camden Soc. 1875), 60.

made a Canon of Christ Church, an important and lucrative appointment which he was to hold for the rest of his life. In 1688, thanks to his royal patron, he was made Dean of Christ Church, a key position in the University and in the Church. However, at this point, as was often to happen, Woodroffe's good fortune deserted him; for, a few days after his appointment as Head of that great House, James II lost his throne, and Woodroffe was ejected and replaced by Dean Aldrich.

Anthony Wood remarks that although Woodroffe was never installed as Dean of Christ Church, he had

by his liberality laid out many 100£^s in repairing it, and laboured much for its recovery.²⁸

Within a few years a further object for his liberality arose, for another (though, it must be admitted, lesser) headship became vacant: in 1692 Woodroffe became Principal of Gloucester Hall. At this time the Hall could truly be described as moribund. Byrom Eaton, the resigning Principal, was non-resident, preferring to live at his rectory at Nuneham Courtenay. As early as 1676, Prideaux had noted:

Gloster Hall is like to be demolished, the charge of Chimny money being so great that Byram Eaton will scarce live there any longer. There hath been noe schollers there these three or four years; for all which time the hall beeing in arrears for this tax the collectors have at last fallen upon the principal who beeing by the Act liable to the payment hath made great complaints about the town and created us very good sport; but the old fool hath been forced to pay the money which hath amounted to a considerable sum.²⁹

Loggan's well-known drawing³⁰ of the previous year, 1675, shows the Hall in a state of advanced decay, perhaps partly attributable to its use during the Civil War, when, according to Robert Harley, it was converted into a forge and armoury.³¹

If, at first sight, it may seem surprising that Woodroffe should have undertaken the headship of so decrepit and unpromising an establishment, it must be supposed that he would have been at great pains to distance himself from the displaced Stuart regime with which he had been so closely associated. He was probably glad to take any Oxford headship that he could get in order to restore his reputation and fortunes. And the way in which he took up the reins at Gloucester Hall is at least an indication of his energy and imagination.

Woodroffe plunged eagerly into his new duties, and within a few days of his appointment to Gloucester Hall, in August 1692, repair work had begun; largely, it seems, at his own expense. As Wood says,

the said ancient receptacle of learning having lain void of Students several years . . . Dr. Woodroffe, a person of generous and public spirit, being minded to recover it from ruin, took upon him the Principality, bestowed several hundred pounds in repairing it & making it a fit habitation for the Muses: which being done he, by his great interest among the gentry, made it flourish with hopeful sprouts.³²

In that same crowded first week at the Hall, Woodroffe wrote a letter to Robert Harley at the Inner Temple in which he alludes to perhaps the most striking venture of his life: the endeavour to launch the Greek College:

²⁸ A. Wood, *History and Antiquities of the Colleges and Halls of Oxford*, (ed. Gutch), 636.

²⁹ *Op. cit.* note 27, 52.

³⁰ D. Loggan, *Oxonia Illustrata* (1675), plate xl.

³¹ Hist. MSS. Comm. 29, *Portland MSS.* iii, 513.

³² Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, iv, 641.

On 15th I was admitted by the Vice Chancellor to Gloucester Hall, which I find a very capacious place, capable of receiving 150 or thereabouts, and I find I am like to have some company there besides our few Greeks, indeed the statutes require that we shut not our gates against any. I hope by Michaelmas to have a great part of the place in readiness. I have already surveyed every spot and provided some materials and set men at work. Every one here seems to encourage. I would be glad if you could enquire when the Turkey Company meet, for it will be necessary that I should wait upon them as soon as may be. I hope you have prepared Lord Paget, and if he had not already pitched upon his chaplain,³³ it would be convenient that a person should attend him who would be fit to promote our affair in the East.³⁴

On 30 August Woodroffe is recorded³⁵ as having appeared in person before the Company in London to seek its assistance in furthering his great design.

THE GREEK COLLEGE

The possibility of setting up a Greek College in Oxford, and indeed at Gloucester Hall, had been in the air for some time. Anthony Wood, writing in 1677, says there was

a great talk of converting Gloucester Hall into a College for the education of 20 or 30 Greeks in Academical learning, and to send them home . . .³⁶

And even earlier, in 1668, according to John Covel,³⁷ later chaplain to the English ambassador at the Porte:

there was one Jeremias Germanus here at Oxford (well known to Dr. Woodroffe) . . .³⁸

In the following year, when Covel set out for Constantinople, he says

Dr. Woodroff sent out by the ship which carried me, a present of Bookes to the abovesaid Jeremias Germanus, which I delivered to him.³⁹

In 1692 then, as Edward Harley wrote in a letter to his father, Woodroffe was

endeavouring to revive an old designe of bringing over yong Greek youthes to be educated. If it take effect it may be of great use;⁴⁰

and possibly, as Daniel and Barker suggest in their *History of Worcester College*, he was appointed, or secured appointment, to the Hall with this particular purpose in mind. Certainly it was not long before one Edward Joyner of Horspath, who describes himself as 'aet. 73 or thereabouts', lauded the project in Latin verse, comparing Woodroffe to a modern Orpheus whose poem *Somnium Navale* would charm Greeks to Oxford, and

³³ As ambassador at Constantinople.

³⁴ *Portland MSS.* iii, 497.

³⁵ J.B. Pearson, *A Biographical Sketch of the Chaplains to the Levant Company* (1886), 66.

³⁶ Wood, *Life and Times*, ii, 379.

³⁷ Dr. John Covel, chaplain to the Levant Company at Constantinople, 1670–77; Master of Christ's College, Cambridge.

³⁸ J. Covel, *Some Account of the Present Greek Church* (Cambridge, 1722), preface, p. i.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Portland MSS.* iii, 488.

looking forward, despite his years, to drinking with them in a greater and more glorious Gloucester Hall.⁴¹

Since 1453, when Constantinople fell at last to the Turks, the Greeks of Asia Minor had been under Moslem rule. This, however, by no means led to the end of Greek civilisation and the Orthodox religion in the famous Greek cities of the Aegean and Mediterranean littoral of Asia Minor. The Turks seem to have generally made no attempt to convert their new Christian subjects; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, an acute English observer of the scene in the 18th century (when her husband was ambassador at Constantinople),⁴² remarks on

the Turks not taking that pains to introduce their own manners as has been generally practised by other nations.⁴³

Christophoros Angelos, a Greek who was at Balliol in 1610, wrote that

to this day they [the Greeks] retain all their old Books & observe their Country[']s Laws, and live as the Christians and Monks in former ages.⁴⁴

In practice, the Turks found it best to use the Orthodox patriarchate and its institutions as an instrument for their rule.

Thus, the Eastern Church was by no means a dying organisation; and contact with it could be maintained relatively easily after the English embassy was established in Constantinople, about a century and a half after the Turkish conquest. One reason for fostering such relations, from the point of view of the English Protestants, was the fact that, since the great schism of 1054, the Eastern Church had been considered heretical in the eyes of Rome. A strong antipathy had grown up between those two churches, particularly since the dreadful sack of Constantinople by the 'Latins' of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Covell says in his *Account of the Greek Church*, written after his embassy service:

it is incredible how great malice, envy and inward hatred there is between the Greek & Latin churches.⁴⁵

Leaders of the Reformation therefore began to look hopefully towards the Eastern Church with a view to effecting a reunion of Christendom, and at the same time outflanking and frustrating the influence of Rome. This attitude was reciprocated in the East. In 1621 Cyril Lucaris, Patriarch of Constantinople, sent Greek students to Switzerland, Holland and England, to study Protestant theology and, if possible, to seek a way of harmonising Orthodox doctrines with those of Protestantism. Rome, for its part, bitterly opposed these moves, and the intrigues of the Jesuits in Constantinople eventually led to the deposition of the Patriarch Lucaris, and his death at the hands of the Turks.

In June 1694 Thomas Smith of Magdalen,⁴⁶ another former chaplain at Constanti-

⁴¹ Wood, *Life & Times*, iii, 426 (29 June 1693).

⁴² Sir Edward Wortley Montagu was ambassador to the Porte from 1716 to 1718.

⁴³ *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (2nd edn., London, 1763), ii, letter XXX (to Alexander Pope, 1 April 1717 O.S.).

⁴⁴ Quoted by T.R. Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic* (1954), 13.

⁴⁵ Covell op. cit. note 38, Preface, p. lii.

⁴⁶ Dr. Thomas Smith was chaplain to the English ambassador at Constantinople from 1668-71, and later vice-president of Magdalen College, Oxford.

nople, writing from London to Woodroffe to renew a request for the return 'of those books which I lent you two years since', says

I heard very lately that you had received letters from two of the Eastern Patriarchs at which I extremely rejoyce.⁴⁷

Though Woodroffe had been an influential and well-connected cleric under the Stuarts, his fortunes had suffered an abrupt reversal in 1688. His prominent part in the efforts to establish closer relations with the Eastern Church, and his scheme for Gloucester Hall, should therefore perhaps be seen as an attempt to align himself with current Church and political views rather than as an eccentric aberration. Thomas Smith mentions more than once, in letters to Woodroffe, his hope that

that great and good designe you have so willingly employed yourself about may at last be happily effected.⁴⁸

It may be that Woodroffe's plans were partly based on sentiment – what Smith, writing to him, refers to as

your generous and truly Christian concerne for the poor Greeks in Turkey⁴⁹ –

and a feeling that the West owed an enormous debt to the Greeks and had somehow failed them in not preventing the absorption of Greece and its Asiatic outposts into the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the political motive, and perhaps concern for his own personal future, must have been prominent in Woodroffe's calculations.

The Greek College was, in the end, a failure, and, despite Woodroffe's keenness, probably had little chance of taking root at Gloucester Hall. As the story has already been told in detail in the accounts mentioned above, only a few salient features need be stressed here. It was never intended that the Hall should be entirely devoted to Greek students; separate accommodation was planned for the Greeks, and some attempt was made, though very late in the day, to achieve this. Hearne writes in 1709:

The Palace of the Beaumonts in Oxford was a most delightful seat, and was often frequented by the Kings of England. Part of it was standing 3 or 4 years since. I guess it to have been a Piece of the Chapell, but it has since been destroy'd to make room for a large Pile of very slight Building erected by Dr. Benjamin Woodroffe, Principal of Gloucester Hall & Canon of Christ Church . . .⁵⁰

Later, he makes it clear that

the Doctor designed it for the Grecians that were to be instructed in the principles of the Church of England, as several of them had been by him in Gloucester Hall.⁵¹

Woodroffe's printed *Model* for the Greek College is an impressive document,⁵² and apart from setting out his plans and the curriculum in great detail, shows a full

⁴⁷ Bodl. MS Smith 66, f.113. (cf. also f.111).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. f.115.

⁵⁰ *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, ed. C.E. Doble, ii (O.H.S. vii), 277.

⁵¹ *Hearne's Collections*, iv (O.H.S. xxxiv), 349.

⁵² Bodl. MS Wood 276A, f.381.

appreciation of the difficulties likely to arise. These mainly centred on problems of recruitment and official sponsorship in the students' home country, and, as Woodroffe's correspondence with the ambassador, Lord Paget, shows, the scheme soon began to fail in this respect. Attempts were then made to persuade individuals in the Greek cities to send their sons independently to Oxford, but this never seems to have led to more than a trickle of students. The first mentioned by name is one Dionysius, who, Woodroffe wrote in 1693, 'is still with us here in Oxford . . . having gone thorow his studies in Mathematics'.⁵³ Dionysius, however, was not, strictly speaking, a student under the Model scheme, but rather a forerunner of it: for in his will, dated 1711, Woodroffe gives a definite commencing date when referring to

Greek youths residing from time to time ever since Mar. 16, 1698 and under my care and tuition in Gloster Hall now Worcester College.⁵⁴

In all, there was probably never more than a handful of Greeks at the Hall at any one time. They (or Woodroffe) composed a fulsome Greek ode (which still survives in original and translation)⁵⁵ to Queen Anne on the occasion of her visit to Oxford in 1704. She had already provided some money for the College in response to Woodroffe's pleas; nevertheless this seemed a good opportunity to remind her of their continuing lack of funds:

Comes Sheba's Wealthy Queen; but what can We
Poor Grecian Youths bring as our Gift to Thee?

.....
Let others give what mighty Store affords:
We give what best with our Low State accords.

The royal visit, however, was perhaps the high point of the venture. In 1705, the Greek Church forbade further recruitment to the College on the grounds that

the irregular life of some priests and laymen of the Greek Church living in London has greatly disturbed the Church. Therefore the Church has also prevented those who wish to go and study at Oxford.⁵⁶

According to Woodroffe, in a letter to Paget, Roman agents had lured some of his students to Paris;⁵⁷ and there had been scandals. Relations with the Eastern Church were by no means broken off, for in 1707 we find the Bishop of London writing to Charlett, Master of University College, Oxford, to recommend the Armenian Archbishop, who proposed to visit the University but 'speaks nothing but his mother tongue'.⁵⁸ However, the fact is that by 1705 the Greek College was virtually at an end, although as late as 1707 the antiquary Thomas Hearne refers to 'one of the Graecians at Gloucester Hall'⁵⁹ – perhaps the sole survivor. The ramshackle building erected for them at the bottom of Beaumont Street, unkindly referred to by Hearne as 'Woodroffe's Folly',⁶⁰ remained standing until 1806.

⁵³ Bodl. MS Smith 54, f.169.

⁵⁴ Oxford University Archives, Chancellor's Court Wills, Vol. W-Y, Hyp./B/21.

⁵⁵ G. Apatl. Ἡ τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν αὐταρκεία [The Self-sufficiency of Holy Writ] (Oxford, 1704), 28–32.

⁵⁶ Lambeth MS 933, f.49, quoted in Tappe, 'Greek College', *Oxonienia*, xix (1954), 102.

⁵⁷ Woodroffe to Lord Paget, 25 April, 1705, quoted in Tappe op. cit. note 56, 110.

⁵⁸ Bodl. MS Ballard 9, f.31.

⁵⁹ Hearne's *Collections*, i (O.H.S. ii), 339.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* iv, 349.

THE COOKES BEQUEST: FINANCES

Woodroffe had, however, simultaneously been trying for some years to obtain for the Hall the Cookes bequest, which was eventually, after his death, to make possible its refoundation as Worcester College; and it may be that his exertions to this end diverted his attention from the ailing Greek College. This episode has been fully covered by Dame Lucy Sutherland in her article 'The Foundation of Worcester College'.⁶¹

Woodroffe was an energetic and enthusiastic campaigner for the cause, but in the end his efforts came to nothing. Despite, or perhaps because of, his royal connexions, he seems to have been unpopular in influential quarters in the University; and his Whig affiliation, which he made no attempt to conceal, was alone enough to provoke fierce opposition in predominantly Tory Oxford. Apart from this, his uncertain judgement in financial matters may have had much to do with his failure. An example of clumsy manoeuvring for gain can perhaps be seen in his strange conduct over the proctorship in 1668. Noticing that Balliol had no statutable M.A. to occupy that office, for which its turn had come round, Woodroffe had himself entered on Balliol's books as a commoner, and was duly elected proctor.⁶² The validity of this ploy was, however, challenged, and he was eventually unseated after an appeal to the King and the Privy Council.

Woodroffe married successively two wealthy heiresses: first, in 1676, Dorothy Stonehouse, sister of Sir Blewet Stonehouse, Bt., of Besselsleigh, Berks., who, according to Canon Prideaux, was worth £3,000 – a large sum at the time. By this marriage he had a son, Benjamin, who later went to Gloucester Hall.⁶³ His second marriage was to Mary Marbury, of Marbury in Cheshire, heiress to an estate which was heavily encumbered with debt. Woodroffe made speculative, but unsuccessful, attempts to purchase the estate and pay off the debts, but became involved in lawsuits which he pursued as far as the House of Lords, and finally lost. His will, a rambling and repetitious document written just before his death, refers twice to debts relating to the Greek College:

... whereas there is due to me between 2 and 3 thousand pounds which I have expended in the maintenance of her Majesties Scholars of Greek Youths ... in Gloucester Hall now Worcester College beyond what I ever received of Royal Bounty ...⁶⁴

He insists twice, rather desperately, on their status as 'her Majesties said Scholars', but one is left with the feeling that he had incurred heavy expense without any real hope of reimbursement. He was similarly unlucky as regards salt duty, amounting to £600, due to the Treasury in respect of salt mines which he owned in Cheshire, possibly part of the Marbury estate. Woodroffe seems to have hoped that the duty would be waived, in consideration of his expenditure on the Greek College, but the Treasury was unmoved. He was further disappointed when the gift from the Queen, for the benefit of the College, of a forfeited estate in Lancashire, turned out to be of little value, owing to the claims of prior creditors.

In 1693, Woodroffe is known to have been engaged in farming activities on land owned by Sir Edward Turnour at Ryse in Essex, near Bishops Stortford.⁶⁵ On a larger scale, he was also concerned in trading ventures in the West Indies: in 1702 he and

⁶¹ L. Sutherland, 'The Foundation of Worcester College', *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1979).

⁶² Wood, *Life and Times*, ii, 129 and 132.

⁶³ Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*.

⁶⁴ Woodroffe's will (note 54 above).

⁶⁵ West Sussex R.O., Shillingee MSS. 194, 201 and 202.

others petitioned to be allowed to incorporate a company for colonising Tobago, and also to fit out privateers to operate against the French in the Caribbean.⁶⁶ Whether any of these concerns were profitable is not known, but presumably they were not particularly so, for, towards the end of his life, Woodroffe was ruined financially. Attempts were made to sequester his Christ Church canonry to satisfy some of his creditors, but the Dean and Chapter successfully disputed the Court's jurisdiction.⁶⁷ However, in 1708/9, Woodroffe himself was committed to the Fleet Prison for debt: an almost unique fate for a Head of a College. How long the imprisonment lasted is uncertain, but the effect of these accumulated troubles – due to a mixture of excessive liberality and unwise speculation – took its toll of his health. He died in London on 17 August 1711, at the age of 73, and was buried at St. Bartholomew's, Royal Exchange, of which church he had been Rector for many years.⁶⁸

THE SCHOLAR

'He was a learned man', says Hearne, 'that is so far as related to the languages, being well-skilled in Greek & Latin & some of the Orientals . . .'⁶⁹ This is, indeed, true, but only part of the truth. He is known to have taken a service in Italian at Guildhall in February 1691/2 for the benefit of Italian merchants in London;⁷⁰ and a copy of his translation of the Prayer Book into Portuguese is still in the Bodleian Library.⁷¹ Apart from these linguistic abilities, Woodroffe, in the expansive manner of the age, was also keenly interested in scientific subjects. Science had become an important subject of study at Oxford in the second half of the 17th century, with the establishment of the Savilian chair, the Tomlins lectureship in medicine, and the Botanic Garden; and soon after the Civil War an Experimental Philosophy Club was formed, John Locke, Christopher Wren and Woodroffe being members. These three are known to have attended lectures by the German scientist, Peter Sthael, brought over from Strasbourg by Robert Boyle to give the first known chemistry courses at Oxford.⁷² Woodroffe was elected F.R.S. in 1668. His draft statutes for the proposed Worcester College particularly stressed the importance of science in the curriculum, and this would, indeed, have been no more than a continuation of the régime at Gloucester Hall during his time. One of his pupils there in the 1690s – incidentally at the time of the Greek College – was Moses Stringer, a notable scientist who later became Mineral Master General. In a letter of 1707 he addresses Woodroffe as 'the learned Dr. Woodroffe, Master of Worcester College (late Gloucester-Hall) in Oxford',⁷³ and mentions being taught science by him in Oxford:

Since I had the honour of your instructions in the University concerning physick and chemistry, I have in a particular manner applied myself to the study of those sciences . . .⁷⁴

⁶⁶ *Calender of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (1702), 421–22.

⁶⁷ *Hearne's Collections*, ii (O.H.S. vii), 189 and 281.

⁶⁸ J.P. Malcolm, *Londinium Redivivum* (1802–7), ii, 428.

⁶⁹ *Hearne's Collections*, iii (O.H.S. xiii), 207.

⁷⁰ Hist. MSS. Comm. 5th Report, *Pine-Coffin MSS*, Appendix, 382.

⁷¹ *O Livro da Oraçao Commun*, tr. B. Woodroffe and R. Abendana (1695).

⁷² R. Gunther, *Early Science at Oxford* (O.H.S. lxxvii), 22–3; Wood, *Life and Times*, i, 472.

⁷³ C.J.S. Thompson, *The Quacks of Old London* (1928), 248–51.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Stringer was particularly interested in discovering 'a Medicine which very much lessens the Infirmities of Age, renders Nature vigorous, & Stretches the span of Human Life as far as Heaven permits.' In a further letter he describes to Woodroffe his

drops which are called Elixir Renovans . . . to be had only at my house . . . at a Guinea a Bottle . . .⁷⁵

The drops are said to have cured, among others, 'one who had been a slave in Algiers in the year 1678'. Released in a sorry condition at the age of 55, he 'continued a year in St. Thomas Hospital but could find no remedy . . . He languished 20 years until he took my Renovating Elixir & is now absolutely recovered.'

Whether Woodroffe was impressed by what would now be considered quack remedies, or had any hand in such experiments, one can only guess; however, he had a high enough opinion of Stringer to appoint him to teach chemistry at Gloucester Hall; and the two men were associated in the Tobago enterprise already mentioned. It is also of some interest that the Tsar, Peter the Great, during his stay in London in 1698 'sent for Mr. Stringer, an Oxford chymist . . . to show him some of the choicest secrets and experiments known in England'.⁷⁶

Another associate of Woodroffe's in scientific matters was John Aubrey, who corresponded with him in 1695 on the subject of medicinal springs near Oxford. In a letter from London, dated 18 July, 1695, to Llwyd, Keeper of the Ashmolean, Aubrey wrote:

Mr. Toland . . . tells me my springs are much frequented. The Royal Society ordered me yesterday to send for four bottles. I have this day sent to Dr. Woodroffe to doe it.⁷⁷

Three days later, Woodroffe replied from Gloucester Hall; first stressing his pre-occupation with his recruitment of suitable undergraduates:

Both your letters I have, but to the first I was hindered in giving an answer by Several Friends who came to place their Children here, who being strangers in the University required more of my time to wait on them than I could otherwise have spared. I have entered 5 in my Hall since I saw you, and expect 4 or 5 more within a weeke or 10 days, most of them the sons of persons of Quality. As to the Waters, that near Wootton I have stuck to, having dranke of it for above 3 weeques, and that with greate Satisfaction, having received greate Benefit by it. The Quantity I drink is somewhat above two Quarts, which hath always passed very well: noe way offending the head (which is incident to some Waters) and leaving a lightsomeness after it which I conceive to be either by removing the Burden under which Nature lay oppressed before, or else by being mix'd of such particles as are proper to affect and raise the Animal Spirits . . . But I do not think it yet ripe enough to be recommended to the World in the Transactions of your Society: nor can I send any of the Water to stand your Philosophicall Trials, it having of late been so much diluted by the rain-Waters.⁷⁸

In the end, it seems that Aubrey had to travel to Oxford himself to test the waters, but was particularly anxious to do so in Woodroffe's company, as he explained to Anthony Wood on 2 September 1695:

I had a great desire that Dr. Woodroffe should see that spring at Wotton, and spake several times to goe, but he could not till Mr. Pearce returned because of his reading to the classes in Mr. Pearce's

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ For the link between Woodroffe and Stringer, I am indebted to Dr. J.H. Appleby's article 'Moses Stringer (fl. 1695-1713) Iatrochemist and Mineral Master General', *Ambix*, xxxiv.1, March 1987.

⁷⁷ Bodl. MS Ashmole 1829, f.25.

⁷⁸ Bodl. MS Aubrey 13, f.273.

absence. Well, the night before I left Oxon. he, his son and 2 men and I went, and I showed him first the . . . indication, then tryed the water in the cartway which turned as black as jute; it was a fine dry time. The Doctor was on the other side and tryed the water in the Ditch which turned also; says he - I have found out the Well: and it shall be called *Woodroffe's well*. Lord, what snatching and catching there is of other men's discoveries.⁷⁹

Despite his slightly resentful comment, Aubrey valued Woodroffe's opinion on his work. In a postscript to the letter to Llwyd quoted above, he mentions 'a box of books for you at Gloucester Hall, carriage paid. I hope it may come safe but the box is very feeble. I would have my *Idea* sent speedily to Dr. Woodroff.' This is a reference to Aubrey's *Idea of Education of Young Gentlemen*, a treatise on educational reform, with a strong bias towards mathematics, which he considered his most important work.⁸⁰ Woodroffe, for his part, was keenly interested, assuring Aubrey that 'I long to see your method'.⁸¹

Unfortunately, no work of Woodroffe's on scientific subjects remains, but it seems clear that he was well-respected among scientists of his day; and, indeed, that he was an all-round scholar of considerable distinction. Aubrey's bequest of his important library of mathematical books to Gloucester Hall,⁸² during Woodroffe's early years as Principal, can be regarded as both a personal tribute and recognition of Woodroffe's standing as a scholar.

CHARACTER AND CHURCHMANSHIP

Woodroffe is reputed to have been a generally unpopular man, and it is easy to conclude that this contributed decisively to his two great disappointments: the failed Greek College, and the elusive Cookes bequest which, for all his efforts, so nearly went to Balliol. John Ince, the Fenchurch Street lawyer hired by Balliol to outmanoeuvre Woodroffe, assured his clients in 1702 that

... our London Divines knew him so well at Sion Colledge that they have but meane thoughts of him . . . I am told that Woodroffe is a Beggar and 'tis dangerous to trust him with such a sume or any part of it.⁸³

On the other hand, the Whiggish Archbishop Tenison is said to have supported Woodroffe and sharply rebuked Ince.⁸⁴

The truth probably is that many of Woodroffe's difficulties were due to the intensity of religious and political feelings in post-Restoration, post-Revolution and 18th-century Oxford. Woodroffe, the nominee of James II for the Christ Church Deanery, must have done all he could after the Glorious Revolution to free himself of the taint of association with the old regime. But such things are not soon forgotten. Moreover he was a friend of the Whigs, and, according to Hearne, ran into trouble in the Christ Church common-room in 1706 for speaking out in their favour;⁸⁵ he showed further open support in the same year in a sermon praising the Duke of Marlborough, which he preached at

⁷⁹ Bodl. MS Wood F51, f.11.

⁸⁰ Aubrey's *Idea* was never published and is in Bodl. MS Aubrey 10.

⁸¹ Bodl. MS Aubrey 13, f.273.

⁸² What happened to Aubrey's extensive library is discussed in Michael Hunter, *John Aubrey and the World of Learning* (1975), 243-46.

⁸³ Ince Papers, quoted by Sutherland op. cit. note 61, 63, note 11; and 67, note 38.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 68, note 47. Ince reports the Archbishop as saying 'fye man, fye, you are misinformed.'

⁸⁵ *Hearne's Collections*, i (O.H.S. ii), 313.

Woodstock and subsequently published.⁸⁶ Such a man was bound to have enemies in an Oxford that remained predominantly Jacobite, Tory and non-juring.

As has already been suggested, the main motivation behind the launching of the Greek College was anti-Roman; and Woodroffe's own very pronounced opposition to Rome can be seen in, for example, his printed sermon of 1690 entitled *The Fall of Babylon – or seasonable reflections on the Novelties of Rome, with the Rise, Growth and Final Overthrow of Antichrist now at hand . . . For the benefit of all who abominate the Corruptions of the Great Whore and would not be partakers of her Sins or Plagues*.⁸⁷ He was, however, far from being an extremist in Church affairs, and in 1685 even his critic, Prideaux, grudgingly admitted that he was a suitable candidate for the bishopric of Oxford:

Our good Bishop is fal'n very ill and I fear will not long last [he wrote to Woodroffe's pupil Ellis]. We begin already to be solicitous who may be his successor. I believe it may be your tutor, and I am of opinion he may not be so unfit a man as some apprehend.⁸⁸

Hearne, a notoriously unreliable and biased critic, calls him 'a man of whimsical and shallow understanding';⁸⁹ but this, by Hearne's standards, is fairly mild. Prideaux was more closely acquainted with Woodroffe, having been a colleague at Christ Church for many years. In his letters to Ellis⁹⁰ he makes much of so-called 'blunders' in Woodroffe's sermons, which he describes as 'scandalous and duncecall'. However, the examples he quotes, such as Woodroffe's 'advice to everyone to give godsons such gifts as might put them in mind of their mortality' (Alderman Harris having just been buried in his christening 'sheet'), and Woodroffe's alleged contradiction of the Psalmist's proclaimed life-span of threescore years and ten (Harris having lived 80 years), seem more like pulpit jests than blunders. The same may perhaps apply to his claim, in the same sermon, that he 'caught a cold by lying on the ground 30 years ago in the King's service'. And if it is true, as Prideaux says, that this particular sermon had previously been used by Woodroffe for the funeral of the Duke of York's coachman, he was probably not the first, nor the last, clergyman to have practised such an economy. It is difficult to know what to make of Prideaux's well-known story of Woodroffe standing 'in the great window next the quadrangle' at Christ Church, 'where he was seen by Mr. Dean himself and almost all the house' with 'Madam Walcup . . . toying with her most ridiculously, and fanning himself with her fan for almost all the afternoon'.⁹¹ The story dates from 1674, when Woodroffe was 36, two years before his first marriage, and perhaps illustrates, rather than anything else, the want of judgement more than once mentioned by Hearne. Prideaux also strongly implies that Woodroffe was a fortune-hunter; but his qualifications for making such a suggestion are suspect, for he makes no secret of his mercenary approach to his own projected marriage.⁹² Prideaux's strange and equivocal testimony about Woodroffe can perhaps be largely discounted as the sort of gossip that is often current in common-rooms and other closed societies. There is more than a little evidence that Woodroffe was outspoken and liable to upset his colleagues at Christ Church and elsewhere in the University.⁹³ Sir John Perceval,

⁸⁶ Ibid. 282.

⁸⁷ B. Woodroffe, *The Fall of Babylon* (Oxford, 1690).

⁸⁸ Op.cit. note 27, 143.

⁸⁹ *Hearne's Collections*, ii (O.H.S. vii), 277.

⁹⁰ Op. cit. note 27, 7 and 26.

⁹¹ Ibid. 23.

⁹² Ibid. 143 and 144.

⁹³ Apart from the incident in Christ Church common room mentioned above, Hearne relates that in a speech in the Council Woodroffe called a pro-proctor *titubans magister* (a tipsy Master) 'which word so exasperated a great many of the masters that they would not let him go on': *Hearne's Collections*, i (O.H.S. ii), 61.

brother of Sir Philip, and father of the 1st Earl of Egmont, probably expressed a balanced view:

Dr. Woodroffe is one for whom I have much respect, yet he is not well-beloved either in or out of his own college.⁹⁴

Yet there are also many signs, from the tone of his letters, that Woodroffe was an agreeable and affable man: for example, his indulgent references to his young pupil, Sir Philip Perceval, as 'my goode friende Sir Philip' and 'our young cavalier';⁹⁵ his playful request to Sir Robert Southwell to pass on his 'homage to Prince Rupy';⁹⁶ and his postscript to a letter to the London apothecary and F.R.S., John Houghton of 'humble service to yourself and Lady – and pray forget not Bobby'⁹⁷ – presumably Houghton's son. Such trivial indications do not suggest a disagreeable or unpleasant character. And his moving account of the naval battle with the Dutch suggests a man of courage, perception and compassion.

There is one further piece of evidence about what sort of man Woodroffe was. Lucy Sutherland was not quite right in stating that Worcester College has no manuscripts of Benjamin Woodroffe.⁹⁸ It has, in fact, one: a letter purchased at Sotheby's by C.H. Wilkinson in 1936.⁹⁹ The letter is extremely long – thirteen closely written foolscap pages – and consists of advice to an unnamed young man on entering upon his majority, estate and marriage. The addressee is called 'the youngest of a numerous issue', and is urged to be worthy of 'the motto of your Family, viz. *Honorantes me honorabo*'. This motto belongs to the Hastings family, heirs to the Earldom of Huntingdon, and the letter must be intended for Theophilus Hastings, fourth, but only surviving, son of the 6th Earl.¹⁰⁰ Theophilus succeeded to the title in 1660 at the age of 10. He was Woodroffe's pupil at Christ Church, and Woodroffe wrote frequently to him at Donington Park, his Leicestershire seat. This particular letter can perhaps be dated about June, 1672, two or three months after Theophilus's marriage, for Woodroffe refers to his intention to send this lengthy advice to his ex-pupil in another letter – the one already mentioned – which he sent to the young Earl from the Fleet on 26 April 1672:

I wish your Lordship all happiness with your honourable countess, and although I had not time to transcribe those papers I told your Lordship I was so bold as to prepare for you, I will take the freedom to give your Lordship one general caution.¹⁰¹

He proceeds to give Huntingdon there and then a considerable amount of advice about suitable conduct for a young nobleman. There can be little doubt that the Worcester College manuscript represents 'those papers' which Woodroffe's naval service prevented him from copying in April 1672, and which he probably had time to transcribe later in the year.

Whether they were of his own composition, or, as is perhaps more likely, were derived from the moralistic writings of others, is uncertain. Advice to the young is a

⁹⁴ Hist. MSS. Comm. 63, *Egmont MSS.* ii, 80.

⁹⁵ B.L. Add. MS 46951A, f.1; 46952, f.187.

⁹⁶ B.L. Add. MS 46952, f.2. Presumably the reference is to Prince Rupert, cousin of Charles II.

⁹⁷ B.L. Add. MS 4276, f.208.

⁹⁸ Sutherland op. cit. note 61, 62.

⁹⁹ Worcester Coll. Lib. MS 209.

¹⁰⁰ *D.N.B.* (Theophilus Hastings, 7th Earl of Huntingdon, 1650–1701).

¹⁰¹ *Hastings MSS.* ii, 157.

subject with a long pedigree, going back at least as far as Seneca; and Woodroffe, in a letter to Lord Huntingdon written in 1697, mentions 'the loose sheets of advice written by your grandfather'¹⁰² – possibly a reference to these same papers. It seems most likely that the Worcester College manuscript letter is a mixture of Woodroffe's own views and conventional wisdom. In part, it deals with mundane topics, such as the prudent management of a great estate, living within one's means, dealing with servants, performing public duties, etc. There are also recommendations about how to behave in company, and what subjects of conversation to encourage or avoid. Among the latter: 'a wise man will never make his wife's Beauty or good Parts his Theme, for that is to Pimpe to his own bed'. The Earl is advised 'when you are settled in the Countrey, where 'twill not be expected that you should personally entertaine all that come to dine with you till the houre of sitting down, but may be supposed to be in your Study . . . you may appoint your Gentleman daily to come up half an houre att least before dinner to acquaint you with what guests you have that day, that out of the best bookes in each Faculty . . . you may start to Them gratefull occasions of discourse . . . But this must be your secret . . . and by this alone will you soone spreade soe greate a Fame that the learnedst men in every Faculty will reverence and admire you . . .' This gives something of the flavour of life in a great house; and also, it must be said, strikes a somewhat cynical note, which is echoed in the recommendation to hire servants at the lowest possible wages, keeping them happy with an occasional tip: 'A crowne or an Angel given at a good time . . . will be of more import to Them then foure times the same paid in Wages'. A similar sentiment recurs in the recommendations about making use of women's company: 'Acquaintance with the Women who frequent the drawing Roomes is usefull because to such a man talks with more Liberty and lesse Suspicion of designe, & they are most apt to tell you all they knowe'. On the other hand, there is much sound stuff about the impartial administration of justice on the bench; a wide course of reading is encouraged to make the Earl an 'accomplisht gentleman' rather than a pedant, bearing in mind that 'tis much better to have the knowledge then the language of the Greeks & Romans'; and country sports are recommended, 'but Remember these are to be your Sports onely, not your life'. Finally, Woodroffe imparts advice, presumably based on his own experience, about conduct at Court. The young man is recommended to 'avoid fixing your Selfe under any particular Faction', and to seek to advance his family's interest 'by adhering to those who are successors to the Crowne'; indeed, 'Experienced Courtiers are never too inquisitive after newes, 'twill offer itselfe . . . and besides this a wise man upon the observing of Actions, & comparing passages & interests, will be able to judge on what hinges things move'.

In so far as it is legitimate to deduce anything about Woodroffe himself from this letter, one must conclude that it is the work of a rather worldly man, with an eye fixed firmly on the main chance. It is, however, fair to add that he is here writing rather formally, as if wearing his tutor's cap and gown, in contrast to the easy manner of his private correspondence.

CONCLUSION

Woodroffe's predecessor, Eaton, appears to have passed many peaceful years at Gloucester Hall – apart perhaps from the nocturnal incursion in 1687 of twelve armed

¹⁰² Ibid. 298.

robbers who stole his plate and drank his wine, after which he withdrew to Nuneham Courtenay.¹⁰³ As Wood says:

In 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, not one scholar in Gloucester Hall, onlie the principall and his family and two or three more families that live there in some part to keep it from ruin. The paths are grown over with grass and . . . the way into the hall and chapel nailed up with boards.¹⁰⁴

By contrast, Woodroffe's life at the Hall was packed with activity. From the very first days of his appointment until shortly before his death he was almost frantically busy. In the first place, he was exerting himself to revive the derelict Hall by injecting his own money, and by using his aristocratic contacts to drum up a supply of undergraduates; at the same time he was wrestling with the problems of launching the Greek College, of attracting a flow of Greek students, and providing for their transport, accommodation and welfare. Then, as soon as the Cookes benefaction became a possibility, he was tireless in his efforts to obtain it for Gloucester Hall: for example, we know that in the autumn of 1698 he was writing every few days to John Ellis, by then Under-Secretary of State, seeking to remove all possible obstacles to the grant of the Royal Warrant for incorporation of the proposed new college.¹⁰⁵

It seems that there were even objections to the conversion of the Hall into a College, for on 3 October 1698 Woodroffe wrote to Ellis:

. . . if any be displeas'd at our having the stile of a Colledge, I know not why we may not be endowed in the stile of an Hall as they are at Cambridge.¹⁰⁶

However, by the end of the month Woodroffe had succeeded in obtaining a charter for the new college and indeed began referring to it as Worcester College.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, other difficulties arose which postponed the true beginning of Worcester for another 16 years, by which time Woodroffe was dead. Nevertheless, his claim:

I think I shall not assume too much in this affair if I should say 'twas what had never like to have been, nor . . . can yet well be without me.¹⁰⁸

was, in the outcome, hardly an exaggeration.

All this, however, took place at a very late stage in his life. His earlier career had been based upon hopes of advancement at Court, in London, and in the Church; and by 1688, when the Deanery of Christ Church was awarded to him, he was on the verge of breaking through to the highest ranks open to one whose chosen avenue of promotion lay in Church and University preferment. His disappointment, when his Stuart benefactors were banished and the Deanery was so abruptly taken from him, must have been intense, and the future bleak indeed.

It would be facile, and probably a little unfair, to describe as turncoat and opportunistic the process by which, in the next few years, the Court chaplain of the Restoration changed course and worked out for himself a second career, diminished in importance but not lacking in distinction, at Gloucester Hall. As has been suggested,

¹⁰³ Wood, *Life and Times*, iii, 241.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* ii, 398.

¹⁰⁵ Woodroffe to Ellis, B.L. Add MS 28883, ff.151, 171, 185, 191.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* f.205.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* f.226.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* f.195.

the jealousy felt towards him by at least some contemporaries probably stems from the changes of position, and perhaps of loyalty, which he felt obliged to make. Woodroffe certainly seems to have been adept at securing the continuance of royal favour: for he obtained grants for the Hall from both William III and Queen Anne, and speaks in a letter of being with the King 'in his closett';¹⁰⁹ and, in his will, of receiving a promise of the Queen's bounty 'from her own Royal lips'.

His failures in these last years can probably be ascribed to a lack of practical wisdom and an inability to concentrate on a limited number of attainable objectives; certainly there was no lack of drive and energy, and Lucy Sutherland has left us with an endearing description of him rushing copies of his *Case for Worcester College* to the House of Commons in 1702, and holding them under his gown in the lobby, ready to hand out to Members.¹¹⁰ But, by the end of his life, his various disappointments coupled with his financial problems seem to have become too much for him; and, indeed, his celebrated imprisonment took place when he had reached the advanced age of 70. In his will, which he wrote in the year of his death, he strikes a mournful note, speaking of 'the daies wherein we have been afflicted and the years wherein we have seen evil . . .' He utters a final prayer for 'the distressed Greek Church . . . let a seed be sown that may bring forth fruit there and heal the Division of this Church . . .'¹¹¹ This, it seems, was the failure that troubled him most of all at the end. Throughout his life he had pursued causes – some of them, we may feel, with open self-interest, but others with a kind of headlong enthusiasm, which is a remarkable gift, but difficult to combine with steady judgement. Had he chosen his own epitaph, it might well have been the quotation he prefixed, in 1700, to a Latin essay¹¹² rebutting the doctrines of Rome: *In magnis voluisse sat est*¹¹³ – 'In great endeavours it is enough to have shown a willing spirit.'

The Society is grateful to Worcester College, Oxford, and the Wilkinson Trust for a grant towards the publication of this paper.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. f.195.

¹¹⁰ Sutherland op.cit. note 61, 68.

¹¹¹ See note 54.

¹¹² B. Woodroffe, *Examinis et Examinantis Examen* (Oxford, 1700).

¹¹³ Propertius, *Elegies*, II, x, 6.