

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE

IN 1737 Josiah Tucker, a young churchman, came to the busy, manufacturing outport, Bristol, as a curate of St. Stephen's.

The twenty-four years of his life had recorded no unusual event. He was born in Langharne, Carmarthenshire, in 1713.¹ His father, Josiah Tucker, was a farmer who, not long after his son's birth, moved to a small estate which he had inherited, near Aberystwith, in Cardiganshire. In spite of the father's small means, the lad was sent to Ruthin school, in Denbigshire. Here he attained some proficiency in the classics, and obtained an exhibition at St. John's College,² Oxford, which he entered January 26, 1733.

¹There are no biographies of Josiah Tucker, except the brief accounts given in the various encyclopædias and in the magazines current at the time of his death. With but three exceptions these biographies state 1712 to be Tucker's birth year. These exceptions are the *Penny Cyclopædia* (vol. xxv, p. 338) and the *Annual Register* (vol. xli, p. 350) both of which give 1711 as the birth year, and the *European Magazine* (vol. xxxvi, p. 291) which gives it as 1713. For the following reasons the writer believes that Tucker was born in November or December of 1713: (1) In *Alumni Oxonienses* Tucker is registered as having matriculated "26 Jan., 1732-33, aged 19." (2) The closing line of his obituary tablet on the east wall of the south transept of Gloucester Cathedral reads, "He died November 4th, 1799, in the 86th year of his age." (3) In *Letters to Shelburne* (written 1783), p. 113, he speaks of himself as in his 70th year. (4) In a letter to William Seward, October 29, 1790 (Brit. Mus. Add. Mss., 5419), he speaks of himself as "almost 77 years of age."

²Several of the biographical sketches, e. g., *Public Characters of*
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He was accustomed to walk from his home to Oxford, a hundred and sixty miles. Owing to the bad roads and to his baggage, carried in a bundle, swung from a stick across his shoulder, this was a full six days' walk. The narrow circumstances of the family are shown by the fact that the horse upon which the young man made one of these journeys, and one only,¹ was the only horse owned at the little farm.

There is no line to tell of the friendships, the difficulties, the successes, and the aspirations of his college life. His whole Oxford story, after matriculation, is summed in the simple line of the *Alumni Oxonienses*: "B. A. 1736, M. A. 1739, B. & D. D. 1755."

Adopting the profession offering the best opportunities for advancement to one, who was entered upon the Oxford rolls as "pleb,"² Tucker entered the church, taking holy orders at the age of 22. His preferments may be summarized briefly. In 1735 a Gloucestershire rural parish curacy located him in the region so suggestive, on every side, of the great problems of his land and of his day. This region he never left thereafter, except for brief visits. For sixty-four years he served in the rural curacy, and in Bristol and in Gloucester cities. He saw two generations of local farmers, merchants, traders, manufacturers and politicians, ply their industries and influence the shaping of the business policy of the whole nation.

In 1737 came his first promotion, which gave him a curacy

1798-99, 4th ed., p. 162, and *The Monthly Mag.*, vol. viii, p. 912, state that this exhibition was obtained at Jesus College, Oxford. The *Alumni Oxonienses* registers Tucker at St. John's College.

¹ Young Tucker refused again to inconvenience his father by taking away his only draught animal, and all remaining Oxford journeys were made on foot.

² *Alumni Oxonienses*, v. Tucker.

of St. Stephen's Church, in Bristol, and in May, 1739, he became rector of All Saints' Church, in the same city. In 1737 a minor canonry of the Bristol Cathedral was conferred upon him.

He attracted the attention of the famous Joseph Butler,¹ Bishop of Bristol, and he was chosen by Bishop Butler to serve as the Bishop's private chaplain. His next promotion came through the influence of the Bishop, when, in 1749, he returned to St. Stephen's as its rector, succeeding Dr. Alexander Catcott.

A prebendal stall was granted to him at St. David's in April, 1752, and one at the Bristol Cathedral in October, 1756. His last preferment came in July, 1758, when he was made Dean of the Cathedral at Gloucester. He thereupon resigned his prebendal stall at Bristol Cathedral, but retained the rectory of St. Stephen's until November, 1793, when he resigned in favor of his curate.²

The resignation suggests much in the man's character. Feeling the heavy hand of age, he was willing to lighten his duties some time before he took the final step. His curate, the Rev. Mr. Grenville, appears to have been a worthy

¹ As an instance of Tucker's friendly and intimate intercourse with Bishop Butler an incident related in Tucker's *Humble Address, etc.* (pp. 20 and 21, footnote), may be cited. Tucker states, in this note, that it was the Bishop's custom to walk in his garden for hours even on the darkest night, and that he "frequently had the honor to accompany him." On one such occasion the Bishop asked Tucker what security there was against the insanity of individuals. When Tucker replied that neither physicians nor divines knew of any such security the Bishop continued, "Why might not whole communities and public bodies be seized with fits of insanity, as well as individuals? Nothing else can account for the major part of those transactions which we read in history." Tucker comments that though he had thought little of "the Bishop's odd conceit" at the time, he had "frequently thought of it and applied it to many cases since."

² For an account of this see *Genl's Mag.*, vol. lxiii, part ii, p. 1063.

man and was the father of a large family.¹ Tucker desired that Mr. Grenville should succeed him as rector. The appointment was in the power of the Lord Chancellor, who had other plans for a successor to Tucker. On being apprised of this, Tucker decided to retain the rectory unless Mr. Grenville was to receive the appointment. He had a petition, that Mr. Grenville be chosen, circulated among his parishioners, and it received their signatures unanimously. The Lord Chancellor yielded upon the presentation of this evidence to the worthiness of St. Stephen's curate and promised to advance him to the rectory if Tucker resigned. This Tucker promptly did, thus stripping himself of all duties and emoluments except those of the Deanery of Gloucester, which he held at the time of his death.

Stratford states:² "A Bishopric was subsequently offered to him [Tucker], but this further preferment was declined." The writer has found no evidence to confirm this assertion. On the contrary, there seems to be evidence against it. In his *Humble Address*, etc. (p. 7), published in 1775, Tucker states:

"I thank God I have no cause to complain of any disappointment; having since my advancement to the Deanery of Gloucester in the year 1758, neither directly nor indirectly made the least or the most distant application for any other or higher station."

In his *Series of Answers*, etc. (p. 97), published in 1776, Tucker says:

"As a clergyman it is often objected to me that I am a mercenary wretch or as Mr. Burke was pleased to call me a 'court vermin' writing for preferment. This is very hard and

¹ This increased Tucker's respect—see his *Population Thesis*, part ii, chap. 2 of this monograph.

² *Gloucestershire Biog. Notes* (p. 131), by Joseph Stratford.

cruel after so many solemn declarations to the contrary. Let it therefore be observed that whereas I had often said before that I would never directly nor indirectly seek for preferment, I will here add once for all, that I will never accept of any even tho' offered to and pressed upon me."¹

This attitude remained unchanged in 1783, when, in his *Letters to Shelburne* (p. 2), Tucker wrote:

"As to my views of preferment I have none at all; being quite content with my station."

Tucker was an efficient administrator of the church properties under his care, and he was, in all respects, a conscientious clergyman. Despite the many allegations to the contrary, made by those who deemed him too inclined to spend much time in dealing with commercial themes, he put his duty as a clergyman before all others. Tucker's own clear statement of his aim is in one of his letters to Lord Kames. He says:

"The avocations belonging to my new office of Dean are very many and are too important to be omitted. I came into a house which wanted to be almost rebuilt and into a chapter where many disorders required to be rectified; and I have a cathedral and cloisters to examine and repair, which, in some respects, are the finest Gothic structures in the world, and which are now perhaps the best kept. . . . There are two resolutions which I cannot depart from: The first is that charity begins at home and the second that I will not put it in the power of any one to say that I neglected the proper business of my function and station upon any pretences of

¹This statement was made by Tucker with reference to Burke's attack upon him in the latter's speech of April 19, 1774, when he characterized Tucker as a "court vermin" whose efforts might win for him a Bishopric.

servicing the public. I have always kept clear, I thank God, of this imputation, even my adversaries being judge . . . and I trust I ever shall.”¹

Tucker’s epitaph indicates that he carried out this intention to the very end of his life.² This life rule, and the unimpeached testimony that he followed it to the last, are a sufficient reply to the slur against Tucker’s loyalty to his duty as a clergyman implied in Dr. Warburton’s acid fling that the Dean “made a religion of trade.”³

Tucker appears to have been upon good terms with many leading clergyman of his day, and the strained relations existing between him and Warburton were at least as much due to the latter’s overbearing intolerance of any opposition, as to Tucker’s lack of due respect for his official superior. Bishop Thomas Newton testifies to Tucker’s faithfulness

¹ *Memoirs of Life and Writings of Lord Kames* (Alex. Fraser Tytler), vol. iii, pp. 174-175. This letter is dated Feb. 15, 1764.

² See end of this chapter where epitaph is given in full,

³ John Selby Watson in his *Life of William Warburton* (p. 496) relates that a Dr. Squires and Dr. Tucker were both candidates for the deanery of Bristol. A Mr. Allen, who had spent much money in repairing this deanery for Warburton, was willing to complete his planned repairs if he knew that an acceptable man would succeed the retiring Dean. He asked Warburton about the two candidates and Warburton, with characteristic epigrammatic rudeness, replied: “One makes a trade of religion; the other [Tucker] a religion of trade.” Tucker’s own reply was: “The Bishop affects to consider me with contempt; to which I say nothing. He has sometimes spoken coarsely of me; to which I replied nothing. He has said that religion is my trade and trade my religion. Commerce and its connections have, it is true, been favorite objects of my attention, and where is the crime? And as for religion I have attended carefully to the duties of my parish, nor have I neglected my cathedral. The world knows something of me as a writer on religious subjects, and I will add, which the world does not know, that I have written near 300 sermons and preached them all again and again.” *Gent’s Mag.*, vol. lxxxvi (1799), p. 1003.

in his clerical labors, and laments the lack of harmony between the Bishop and the Dean. Of Tucker he says:

“He was too, an excellent parish priest, an exemplary dean, in keeping his residence and performing his duty, in managing the chapter estates, in living hospitably, in repairing and improving his house and in adorning and beautifying the church and churchyard. In these things he merited well and had many good qualities, but it is to be lamented that he had not the respect for the bishop (Warburton) which was really due to his personal character as well as to his high station. . . . They were both men of great virtues but they were both also men of strong passions. Both were irascible but the Bishop was more placable and forgiving; the Dean longer bore resentment.”¹

Bishop Butler's friendship for Tucker has already been mentioned. It had further illustration in the fact that he selected Tucker, in 1741, to write an account of Methodism desired by the Lord Primate of Ireland.

With the Rev. Dr. C. N. Foster, Tucker was in continuous correspondence² from 1752 until the untimely death of Dr. Forster. With the Rev. Dr. Birch, Tucker corresponded for many years.³ Archbishop Secker, of Canterbury, was enough interested in Tucker and his work to read carefully and to annotate one of the proof copies of Tucker's *Elements*.⁴

Of Tucker's sermons and theological contributions something will be said later in the chapter of this Part I. upon his writings. The evidence cited here seems to show that

¹ Bishop Newton's *Life by Himself* in vol. 2 of *Lives of Eminent English Divines* (London, 1816), pp. 107-108.

² See Forster *Mss.* Brit. Mus. Library *Add. Mss.*, 11275.

³ See Birch *Mss.* Brit. Mus. Library *Mss.*, 4319, vol. xx, 818.

⁴ The copy now in the New York Public Library, Astor Division.

Tucker was a capable and zealous clergyman, helpful throughout his parish, and respected by the clergymen of his day.

But although Tucker was a faithful clergyman, he found time to write much upon political and upon commercial themes, and for a number of years before his appointment as the Dean of Gloucester he took an active part in Bristol politics.

When bills for the naturalization of foreign Protestants and of Jews were before Parliament in 1751 to 1753, Tucker strongly advocated naturalization. The Bristol populace were violently opposed to naturalization. When news reached Bristol that the consideration of one of these bills had been postponed, a great demonstration was held, placards denounced supporters of the bill, and the exulting, intolerant mob, gathered in the public square, even burned Tucker in effigy, dressed in full canonicals.¹

In 1753 Tucker's tract, *Reflections on Turkey Trade*, aroused a storm of opposition against the privileged Turkey trading monopoly, which culminated in action by Parliament in June, 1754, when the trade to Turkey was opened to all British citizens upon the payment of £20.²

From 1754 to 1757 Tucker was a political mentor of the Bristol Whigs. He advised setting up only one candidate in 1754, and they did so; he advised the compromise of 1756, and it prevailed. The event in each case justified his political sagacity. In 1754, when Mr. Robert Nugent (afterward Earl) was the Whig candidate for Parliament from Bristol, Tucker actively espoused his cause. He wrote letters, tracts,³ and newspaper articles in Nugent's behalf,

¹ *Gent's Mag.* (April, 1751), vol. xxi, p. 186.

² See *Preface Reflect, Turkey Trade, 2nd Ed.*, 1755.

³ Such tracts were *Great News from Rome, Reasons for Chusing Mr.*

took part in committee work, kept in regular communication with Nugent, whom he advised as to the local political conditions, and even planned the order of march and invented part of the banner mottoes for a political parade of Nugent supporters.¹ Many of his parishioners opposed Nugent's return. Some of these were influential in church affairs, and threatened that "if he voted against the vestry they would not collect him a single shilling." His reply was characteristic: "Gentlemen, do whatever is right in your own eyes. I shall certainly vote for Lord Clare, consequently against you, and I shall certainly do my duty towards you as your minister, whether you collect for me or not."²

In brief, all of this evidence seems to show that Tucker was a practical politician, a man manager and a successful local diplomat, on occasion and in good cause (the country's or his own). The practical outcome of the Bristol election was that Nugent was returned, and he secured clerical preferments for Tucker, a prebendal stall in the Bistol Cathedral (October 28, 1756) and the Deanery of Gloucester, July 13, 1758.

After his appointment as Dean, Tucker was not so active in local politics. Indeed, for a decade he did little more than attend to his increased clerical duties. His deanship had devolved new and heavy duties upon him, and he had wearied of being misunderstood and calumniated as a self-seeking, commercial, clergyman. The reputation given to him by slanderous attacks of political opponents is illustrated by his statement in a letter to Lord Hardwicke, Dec. 6th, 1760:

Nugent, etc. (See Bibliography of Tucker's works, 1754). In a letter to Dr. Birch (see Birch *Mss.*) on Apr. 29, 1754, he encloses "the eighth paper" he had written during the contest.

¹ These facts are attested to in Tucker's correspondence with Forster, Birch and Nugent. See British Mus. Library *Mss.*

² A tale of Stratford's *Gloucestershire Biographical Notes*, p. 131.

“Before my coming to Gloucester the people were made to believe that I was a monster of the vilest parts of Whiggism and Judaism.”¹

The war with the American colonies aroused Tucker again in the seventies, and he wrote a series of tracts. His separation policy drew down upon him the wrath both of those for the government and of those against it. Such men as Burke and Dr. Johnson saw fit to oppose Tucker's views, Burke attacking² him from the floor of the House of Commons. The very opposition with which he met proves that his tracts had influence, an influence which probably had weight in bringing about the final settlement of the war.

Tucker had favored the union of Ireland and Great Britain from his earliest economic essays, and was convinced it would ultimately be made. In his last tract upon this subject, *Reflections upon Present Matters in Dispute between Great Britain and Ireland* (1785), he opposed an immediate union, arguing, from the Irish standpoint, that until Great Britain abolished her trading monopolies the Irish would be losers by the incorporation.

During his years of political activity, Tucker made a reputation for himself as an able political writer and thinker, and had won notice from leading active politicians and political organs.³ Even the king himself had taken personal

¹ Brit. Mus. Library *Mss.*, 35692 f. 130-134-143.

² The vehemence and abusiveness of Burke's attack was at least partially due to the fact that Tucker, satisfied with Lord Clare's representation of Bristol, had opposed Burke when he sought election from Bristol in 1774.

³ The bitterness of some attacks almost drove him to institute criminal suit. In a letter of May 13, 1754, to Dr. Birch (*Brit. Mus. Mss.*) he asks that inquiry be made from Mr. C. Yorke, an attorney friend, if he would be justified in instituting a suit for libel against the *London Evening Post*, for its virulent attack upon him in its issue of May 11th.

interest¹ in the advancement of the clergyman-politician, because of his effective, loyal, writings and personal influence in the Bristol elections.

Outside of clerical and political friends and enemies, Tucker did not have an extended acquaintance or correspondence. He traveled but little, and so had small opportunity to meet leading men. He was on the continent for a short time, some time prior to 1757.² On this journey he did not meet Turgot, although he later carried on a correspondence, to which reference will be made in the consideration of Tucker's writings.

Despite his little travel and few famous acquaintances or correspondents, Tucker strove to be a citizen of the world. The passage in his *Cui Bono?* in which he is addressing himself to M. Necker, is one of many such confessions of aim scattered throughout his works:

"My aim is the good of mankind. Endeavoring to divest myself of national partialities and local prejudices to the utmost of my power, I now enter on the work proposed, not as an Englishman, but as a citizen of the world; not as having an inbred antipathy to France but as a friend of the whole human species."³

He offers to give all damages to a charity but says he cannot afford the costs of a non-suit. Birch's reply was that altho' "the insults were gross and scurrilous," a libel suit would be uncertain, both because of the law and of a London jury partial to a London paper.

¹ Letter from Dr. Birch, May 18, 1754, states, "His Majesty himself, I am well assured, mentioned you to my Lord Chancellor for Mr. James Yorke's prebend at Bristol," etc.

² In *Instruct. for Trav.* (p. 28) Tucker mentions a brief journey abroad. In a letter to Tucker dated Sept. 12, 1770, Turgot regrets that he did not meet Tucker on this visit. *Oeuvres de Turgot* (Paris, 1810), vol. ix, p. 367.

³ *Cui Bono?* pp. 4 and 5.

But so far as Tucker really attained his ideal of being a "citizen of the world," he attained it largely through books and through acute observations of human nature, and of commercial and political life in his home environment. His only traveling, besides his journey to France, mentioned above, and occasional journeys to London and to Oxford, was a journey to Ireland in 1762¹ and one to Scotland in 1782. Both of these journeys he mentions in letters to Lord Kames, with whom he carried on a long correspondence. This correspondence was begun in 1757, at Tucker's request, and was carried on, with mutual satisfaction, until the death of Lord Kames. Tucker, with a customary frankness, and in the language of the economist, admits that "self-interest alone prompts this desire (for correspondence with Lord Kames)—the knowledge and instruction to be gained by it."²

The correspondence with David Hume was of a similarly strenuous nature. It began through Lord Kames, in 1758, and continued for many years. In 1752, with Lord Townshend, Tucker interchanged a number of argumentative letters,³ dealing with bounties on corn, monopolies and freedom of trade, the relation of national morality to national commerce, and taxation.

There is no evidence in Tucker's letters or works that he had an acquaintance with Adam Smith, or even that he knew of him at all. Nor is there any indication that he knew James Steuart or Bishop Berkeley, except through the

¹ See *Memoirs of Lord Kames* (By Alex. Fraser Tytler), vol. iii, pp. 168 and 178. It was probably upon this visit that Tucker was admitted to the degree of D. D. at the Univ. of Dublin, and was made an honorary member of the Dublin Society. See *Europ. Mag.*, vol. xxvii, p. 18.

² *Memoirs of Lord Kames*, vol. ii, p. 6.

³ *Hist. Mss. Commission* 11th Annual Rep., Append. Part iv, Sessional Reports, vol. xlvii, pp. 371 to 379 and 382.

Querist. His correspondences which bear upon economic themes appear to have been limited to those with Kames, Turgot, Hume and Townshend.

Tucker's family relations can be briefly stated. He was twice married. His first wife, the widow of Mr. Francis Woodward, of Grimsbury, Gloucestershire, died in 1771. January 17, 1781, he married Mrs. Frances Crowe, of Gloucester. She survived him, and it was his will to "bestow all of my worldly goods of every kind and nature to [sic] my beloved wife, Frances Tucker, as my sole executrix and only legatee."¹

No children were born in either marriage. Mrs. Woodward had a son by her first marriage, and this young man Tucker educated and aided in various ways.²

Although Tucker had no children of his own, he had a large family for which to provide. Writing to Lord Kames, in 1764, he says: "Though I have no children of my own, I have no less than eight of an only sister, all thrown upon me, whom I must breed up to get their living in some shape or other."³

The charity of the man went beyond his family and relatives. He is recorded⁴ to have been a liberal benefactor of several public institutions and a patron of merit. The "celebrated John Henderson, of Pembroke College, Oxford, was sent to the University and supported there at the Dean's

¹This will was drawn Sept. 15th, 1797, and was probated Nov. 12, 1799. It is recorded at Somerset House, London. It is a very brief document, simply prefacing the above quotation with a commendation of the testator's soul to God.

²Tucker secured letters of introduction in 1755 to persons of consequence upon the continent, for Mr. Woodward and a young nobleman friend who were to travel and whom Tucker calls his pupils. See *Birch Mss.* Letter of May 11, 1755.

³*Memoirs of Kames*, vol. iii, p. 174.

⁴*The Monthly Mag.*, vol. viii, p. 914.

expense when he had no means whatever to gratify his ardent desire for study.”¹ The instance of his resignation in favor of his curate has been cited above. In 1784 he proposed a plan for competitive theses on commercial and political subjects by students in the English and Scotch universities, and he offered to pledge personally £20 per year for life towards the £200 necessary to the plan.² Speaking of himself in 1782, he says :

“The Dean is a man who, with a very moderate income, which many people would think rather scanty, can truly say that he has all that he wishes and more than sufficient to satisfy his wants.”³

The illustrations given above are sufficient to show that he did manage, even out of his scanty income, to liberally aid deserving persons and plans. Others were probably also liberal in their gifts to him. At least one considerable gift was made to him by a parishioner. When Mary Ann Peloquin died, in 1778, she bequeathed to Tucker, rector of St. Stephen's church, her residence in Queen's Square and £5 per annum.⁴

If one may trust a painting⁵ to give accurate impressions of a man, Tucker was a person of rather heavy build, with

¹ *The Monthly Mag.*, vol. viii, p. 914.

² *Europ. Mag.*, vol. xxvii, pp. 29 sqq.

³ *Treatise on Gov't*, p. 364.

⁴ *Annals of Bristol* (John Latimer), p. 284.

⁵ In a dusty corner of one of the little-used rooms of the Gloucester Cathedral there hangs an oil painting of Tucker. It is unsigned and undated. It gives a front view of Tucker's face and is a much more satisfactory portrait than the one from which the print portraits have been made. The portrait painted by G. Russell was twice engraved. See *Bromley*, p. 472. A print portrait from this painting appears in the *Europ. Mag.*, vol. xxvi, p. 290, and in *Literary Anecdotes* (John Nichols), vol. ix, p. 295.

ruddy face, blue eyes and dark hair. Strong features accent the firmness of expression, which is that of the very determined man, whom an opponent calls obstinate. Tucker's habits were simple and his health was vigorous. The peasant strength coming to him by heredity, and perpetuated by outdoor exercise and plain diet, endured to the end of his active eighty-six years, when a stroke of paralysis brought on death. He was buried in the Gloucester Cathedral. In the east wall of the south transept is erected a memorial tablet. The inscription briefly characterizes the Dean, the man, and his writings :

“ Sacred to the memory of the Revd Josiah Tucker, D. D., Dean of this Cathedral, who in the long period of forty-two years during which he filled that station, was never once obliged by sickness or induced by inclination to omit or abridge a single residence ; and the state of the fabric at the time of his death bore ample testimony to the conscientious and liberal interest which he always took in the preservation and improvement of it.

“ Distinguished by a vigorous comprehensive and independent mind, whilst his theological writings acquired him a high rank among the ablest divines, he was eminently conspicuous for political discernment on the important subject of national commerce ; for the free spirit of which, unrestrained by monopoly and colonial preference, he firmly contended against prepossessions long and generally entertained ; and he lived to see his opinions established on the sure basis of experience.

“ His publications were numerous and of a nature not soon to be forgotten. By them ‘ being dead he yet speaketh ’ and will not speak in vain, as long as an earnest but well tempered zeal for the established church, an enlarged policy, the true principles of commerce and their alliance with the benign spirit of religion, shall be understood, respected and maintained.

“ He died November the 4th, 1799, in the 86th year of his age.”