



H. Stuart Jones. *Intellect and Character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the Invention of the Don.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 285 S. \$101.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-87605-6.

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Mark Pattison in Victorian England: Intellectual Biography and the History of Ideas

H. S. Jones's new monograph sets itself two primary aims, both of which are admirable: firstly, to produce an integrated study of Mark Pattison's life and thought and secondly, to situate these themes within the wider context of debates about the nature of the academic life in a period of unprecedented reform for the English universities. There has arguably never been a satisfactory intellectual biography of Pattison which has done justice to his undeniable complexity and subtlety as a thinker, particularly on the subject of the intellectual and his vocation. A much fuller and more detailed treatment is needed than was provided by John Sparrow's 1967 study, *Mark Pattison and the Idea of a University* which is the most recent and best-known attempt to discuss Pattison's ideas in these terms.

On this score, Jones certainly does not disappoint. He has divided his study of Pattison into two coherent halves. The first treats of Pattison's life biographically from his boyhood in Wensleydale to his years at Oxford, first as an undergraduate when he fell under the spell of John Henry Newman, and then as fellow, tutor, and finally, rector of Lincoln College. The high point of this section is an original and perceptive discussion of the reception of Pattison's *Memoirs* (published posthumously in 1885) and the nature of his cultural afterlife. The second half focuses on key aspects of Pattison's thought which have not been examined in detail before, including his engagement with the mid-Victorian cult of character and the emergence of intellectual history as a distinct scholarly discipline. More familiar themes are also re-

examined such as Pattison's involvement with the movement for the endowment of research. Here, Jones makes the important point that Pattison, unlike many of his contemporaries, understood no fundamental division between the "research" and "teaching" university. For him, the essence of scholarly research was a dedication to the transmission of existing knowledge rather than to the discovery of new.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the study is precisely this ability to question (and, when needed, refute) long-standing misconceptions about Pattison and his life. Most obvious, perhaps, is the popular assumption that he had been the inspiration behind the character of the bitter and ineffectual scholar, Edward Casaubon, in George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* (1871). On the merits and demerits of this and other possible literary representations of Pattison, Jones writes briefly and persuasively. Such representations have, as he rightly points out, occupied far too much space in previous studies. Of greater significance is Jones's demonstration of the longevity of the influence which John Henry Newman and the Tractarians exercised upon Pattison's thought and self-image. Most commentators have, by contrast, explained Pattison's involvement with the Oxford Movement in his younger years as a puzzling blip on an otherwise relatively straightforward development towards a secularist position. Instead, Jones argues convincingly that Newman's emphasis on an ascetic regimen of rigorous self-discipline came to form an integral part not only of Pattison's self-image, but of his conception of the academic

life. Here, Jones follows in the footsteps of David J. DeLaura and others who have demonstrated the long-lasting impact which contact with the Oxford Movement had upon the lives of other prominent Victorian writers and thinkers such as Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater.[1]

Clearly, Jones has thought carefully about the most appropriate method to employ when engaging in the history of ideas, a theme ever present, it would seem, to Pattison's own mind. Following Stefan Collini, Jones maintains that subjective definitions of the intellectual and the academic life do not lend themselves readily to historical and sociological analysis, and that they are most effectively investigated biographically at the level of the individual mind.[2] This is, once more, a point with which Pattison would undoubtedly have concurred, being himself a fine author of intellectual biographies, most famously of the Renaissance scholar Isaac Casaubon. Few, certainly, would disagree that the most important advantage of the biographical method in the writing of intellectual history is its ability to analyze subjective identities and ideas, and I cannot praise Jones's book enough as an intellectual biography conceived along these lines. His ability to tease out the complexities and nuances of Pattison's thought regarding the figure of the intellectual and the nature of the academic life is impressive.

Where the book is less successful, however, is where it attempts to generalize beyond the figure of Pattison. The title of the book suggests that its remit will include not only Pattison's thoughts on the academic life, but also how they fitted in to a broader cultural process that Jones calls "the invention of the don." Despite claiming on a number of occasions that Pattison's historical importance lies in his articulation of a distinctive vision of the academic life which his contemporaries recognized and were influenced by, the reader is left somewhat puzzled at the end of the book as to precisely what this "distinctive" vision consisted of and what its significance actually was. The difficulty in isolating the key features of Pattison's vision is, in itself, no fault of Jones's; it is an inescapable consequence of the complexity of Pattison's thought (which Jones works so hard to show) and of the tendency of both contemporaries and later commentators to oversimplify his position in order to make sense of it.

This problem, is, however, compounded by the nature of the biographical method which Jones endorses. Focused on the life and thought of just one individual, the process of analytical deconstruction in which Jones engages so that our view of Pattison may be complicated

is arguably taken too far. We are left without the possibility of recovering a coherent impression of his position in contemporary debates on which any assessment of his historical significance must rest. "He did not", we are told, "believe that universities were for 'research' as opposed to 'teaching.' In Oxford he was not for the University against the colleges, nor even for the professors against the tutors. Neither was he for academic specialism against literary generalism" (p. 259). When Pattison's "distinctive" vision of the academic life is finally defined—"a general intellectual culture whose practitioner would not merely work away at his own little specialism, but would be able to grasp his own place in the history of thought"—the reader is left unable to locate it, or assess its influence, in the scholarly debates of the time (p. 259). This may well be, as Jones suggests, a result of Pattison's need for complexity, which prevented him adopting straightforward positions in contemporary discussions; whatever the reason, the fact remains that the historical significance that Jones claims for Pattison and his ideas has not been adequately demonstrated.

The title of the book also implies that its conclusions will shed light on wider cultural debates in Victorian England, in particular, that surrounding the relationship between intellect and character. As the title of the fourth chapter would seem to indicate, this will involve a substantial engagement with the mid-Victorian cult of manliness and recent scholarly treatments of the subject. This is not, however, what we find. "Manliness" is, for the most part, treated as a relatively straightforward ideal with a coherent and unchanging set of virtues attached to it. Thus the alignment of "manliness" with "character" is accepted uncritically, as is the assumption that "manliness" always promoted physical labor and was opposed to the softer and more contemplative virtues. There is no obvious engagement with the work of historians of masculinity who have increasingly criticized this monolithic view of manliness and argued instead for the existence of multiple ideals of manliness, emphasizing a wide range of personal qualities including, it should be noted, the "contemplative virtues" of humility, self-abnegation and prayer.[3]

In general the book is very well written and eminently readable, which is not always the case with studies in the history of ideas. Jones has produced an admirable and much-needed intellectual biography of Pattison. His ideas are treated with subtlety and, for the first time, his true complexity as a thinker has been demonstrated. Problems arise only when the book seeks to go beyond this remit and assess Pattison's influence in con-

temporary debates and his broader cultural and historical importance. There would appear to be only one scholarly inaccuracy significant enough to be noted. On p. 207, Jones ascribes a quotation in Pattison's diary to Matthew Arnold in order to demonstrate the latter's disinterest in scientific education; the particular comment was in fact made by his father, the headmaster Thomas Arnold.[4]

Notes

[1]. David J. Delaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969).

[2]. Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 47.

[3]. See, for example, James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995). For the view that Newman promoted an ideal of manliness emphasizing the "contemplative virtues," see Heather Ellis, "Newman and Arnold: Classics, Christianity and Manliness in Tractarian Oxford" in *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800-2000*, ed. Christopher Stray (London: Duckworth, 2007), 46-63.

[4]. For the ascription of the comment to Thomas Arnold see A. P. Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D. D.* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1846), 277.

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