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Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism

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Chapter One: Life of Thomas Morgan

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§1: Introduction

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Half a century ago, in 1967, Peter Gay expressed the wish for reliable biographies of the leading deists.¹ Since then, a lot of studies have appeared about English Deism and its coryphées, such as Blount and Bolingbroke, Toland and Tindal, Collins and Chubb, but nothing up till the present day has been written about Thomas Morgan. Among the English deists, he is the least known and the least studied.² One might say, of course, that Morgan did not belong to the leading or prominent deists.³ Sometimes Morgan is not discussed, because no substance can be found in him.⁴ He is sometimes negatively represented as ‘a somewhat disreputable figure among the Deists, despite his self-proclaimed medical credentials’.⁵ This chapter relies first of all on the chronological and topological indications in his extant works and in the reactions to these works. We have almost no existing archival documents about Thomas Morgan which makes it hard to compose a full-blown biography.⁶ In the second place it relies on the comments of contemporaries such as the prolific writer and scientist William Whiston, the Scottish historian Robert Wodrow, and many other published eighteenth-century sources. Thirdly, it is based on publications by his relatives and local historians, mostly from the 19th century.

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§2: Youth in Somerset

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Thomas Morgan was raised and educated in Bridgwater in the county of Somerset. The dissenting minister, historian, and prolific writer Joshua Toulmin noted in 1794 that ‘Thomas Morgan was in early life a poor lad in a farmer’s house near Bridgewater, in the county of

¹ Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 550.

² J.R. Wigelsworth, ‘The disputed root of salvation in eighteenth-century English deism: Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan debate the impact of the fall’, *Intellectual History Review*, 19 (2009) 29-43 (31): ‘Of all the English deists, Morgan is the least known’; cf J.R. Wigelsworth, ‘A sheep in the midst of wolves: reassessing Newton and the English deists’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 25 (2009) 260-86 (278): ‘He (Morgan) is a figure in need of more study’; cf M. Jackson-McCabe, ‘“Jewish Christianity” and “Christian Deism” in Thomas Morgan’s *The Moral Philosopher*’, in: F. Stanley Jones, ed., *The rediscovery of Jewish Christianity*, (Society of Biblical Literature History of Biblical Studies 5), Atlanta, 2012, 105-22 (105 note 2): ‘The literature on Morgan is unfortunately limited’.

³ Harrison, ‘*Religion*’ and the religions, 62; A. Plummer, *The Church of England in the eighteenth century*, London, 1910, 97.

⁴ M.A. Stewart, ‘Revealed religion: the British debate’, in: K. Haakonsson, ed., *The Cambridge history of eighteenth-century philosophy*, Volume two, Cambridge, 2006, 683-709 (707 note 24).

⁵ D.S. Katz, *God’s last words: reading the English Bible from the reformation to fundamentalism*, New Haven and London, 2004, 147.

⁶ On November 20th, 2017, Liz Grant, archivist of the Somerset Archives at the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton, wrote to me: ‘I have searched our catalogues and cannot find anything which relates directly to Thomas Morgan’.

Somerset'.⁷ Bridgewater is the older form for modern Bridgwater, which lies in the Sedgemoor district in the centre of Somerset. Somerset is a populous and agricultural part of the south-west of England. It still is a rural county with a strong agricultural industry. It has a long historical tradition within the realm of Britain. It has been called a county of contrasts and the cradle of English Christianity.⁸ Besides the City of Bath – the old Roman *Aquae Sulis* –, and the Cathedral City of Wells, there were market towns everywhere such as Bridgwater, Bruton, and Frome – places which play a role in the life of Thomas Morgan. The rural setting is visible in the many observations, which the agriculturalist John Billingsley made in the survey of this county in 1794, in the heyday of agricultural interest. This author is lyrical about the riches of Somerset: 'The richness of its pastures furnishes not only a sufficiency for its own consumption, but also a considerable surplus for other markets'. The book was very successful and was reprinted in 1798 with considerable additions and amendments in which the author also lamented the increase of the poor in the county.⁹ Morgan was a poor boy who knew the hardships of making a living as a farmer from the beginning of his life. We do not know whether he was an orphan, but we can imagine that his youth was difficult. Much has been written about the poor in eighteenth-century Britain: 'The poor were a familiar part of the British social landscape of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.¹⁰ Many people in the 18th century were unable to survive on their earnings. In the beginning of the 19th century the London Police Magistrate Patrick Colquhoun made calculations for the year 1806, which made clear that 12% of the inhabitants of Somerset and even 23% of the inhabitants of the neighbouring county of Wiltshire were to be considered as paupers.¹¹

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§3: Year and place of birth

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No certainty exists about the year and place of Thomas Morgan's birth. This has led to much speculation in modern times. In 1958, a German church historian noted 1680 as his year of birth, but without providing any evidence. Yet until today, we find this year of birth repeated, without any uncertainty in many German encyclopedias, as well as in a lot of other German Biblical and historical publications.¹² From Germany this date crossed borders and is found in British, French, and American literature as well.¹³

⁷ (J. Toulmin), 'Biography. The life of the Rev. Samuel Chandler', *The Protestant Dissenters Magazine*, 1 (1794) 217-23, 257-64, (258 note).

⁸ M. Searle, *Somerset*, reprint, Bristol 2002, 7.

⁹ J. Billingsley, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Somerset, with observations of the means of its improvement*, London, 1794, 7; 2nd edition, Bath, 1798, 35-8.

¹⁰ L.H. Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English poor laws and the people, 1700-1948*, Cambridge, 1998, 21.

¹¹ P. Colquhoun, *A treatise on indigence; exhibiting a general view of the national resources for productive labour*, London, 1806, 265-6.

¹² M. Schmidt, sub voce 'Deismus III: Englischer Deismus', in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edition, Volume 2, Tübingen, 1958, 59-69 (63); H. Hohlwein, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edition, Volume 4, Tübingen, 1960, 1135; M. Schmidt, sub voce 'Aufklärung II', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Volume 4, Berlin/New York, 1979, 597; Chr. Gestrich, sub voce 'Deismus', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Volume 8, Berlin/New York, 1981, 400; U. Krolzik, sub voce 'Deismus', in:

This German conviction about Morgan's year of birth contrasts with the Scottish sobriety of John Cairns, the Presbyterian divine and Principal of United Presbyterian Theological College, who simply stated that the year of birth is not ascertained.¹⁴ Consequently the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* sub voce Morgan does not mention a year of birth.¹⁵ As far as we know, there has never been any certainty whatsoever about Morgan's year of birth. The only certainty being that the year 1680 was not based on any factual evidence. Yet another author stipulated the year 1695.¹⁶

Recently, I found an eighteenth-century source with an indication of Morgan's age at the time of his death: 71 years of age. If this source, written by his friend the novelist Thomas Amory twelve years after Morgan's death, is reliable, then the year of his birth would seem to have been 1671 or 1672.¹⁷

Another question concerns his geographical origin. Most authors mention he originated from Wales.¹⁸ Others state that he was born in the neighbourhood of Bridgwater in Somerset.¹⁹ One

Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde, Volume 1, Wuppertal/Zürich, 1992, 409; H. Busche, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edition, Volume 7, Freiburg, 1998, 470; K.S. Walters, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th edition, Volume 5, Tübingen, 2002, 1501; Fr. Jaeger, ed., *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, Volume 16, Stuttgart/Weimar, 2012, 768; A.H. Gunneweg, *Vom Verstehen des Alten Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik*, 2nd edition, Göttingen, 1988, 127; Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, 63; B. Lang, *Die Bibel: eine kritische Einführung*, 2nd edition, Paderborn, 1994, 212; Ch. Voigt, *Der englische Deismus in Deutschland: eine Studie zur Rezeption englisch-deistischer Literatur in deutschen Zeitschriften und Kompendien des 18. Jahrhunderts*, (Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 121), Tübingen, 2003, 10; H. Graf Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum (Deismus) und Apologetik', in: H. Holzhey, ed., *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe: Die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Volume 1, Basel, 2004, 177-245 (208); H. Graf Reventlow, 'English deism and anti-deist apologetic', in: M. Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible Old Testament. The history of its interpretation*, Volume 2: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, Göttingen, 2008, 851-874 (867); Chr. Bultmann, *Bibelrezeption in der Aufklärung*, Tübingen, 2012, 124 note 30; and many others.

¹³ V.J. Bourke, *History of ethics*, volume 1, New York, 1970, 210; R. Morgan and J. Barton, *Biblical interpretation*, (Oxford Bible Series), Oxford, 1988, 322; G.L. Bray, *Biblical interpretation past and present*, Leicester, 1996, 231; E. Feil, sub voce 'Déisme', in: M. Delon, ed., *Dictionnaire Européen des Lumières*, Paris, 1997, 314-6 (315); J.H. Hayes, 'Historical criticism of the Old Testament canon', in: Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible Old Testament*, 985-1005 (1003 note 76); B.K. Waltke and J.M. Houston, *The Psalms as Christian worship. A historical commentary*, Grand Rapids, 2010, 67; and many others.

¹⁴ J. Cairns, *Unbelief in the eighteenth century as contrasted with its earlier and later history*, (Cunningham lectures for 1880), Edinburgh, 1881, 71.

¹⁵ P. Harrison, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 39, Oxford, 2004, 148-9.

¹⁶ St.J. Vicchio, *Jefferson's religion*, Eugene, OR, 2007, 60.

¹⁷ (Th. Amory), *Memoirs of several ladies of Great Britain; Interspersed with literary reflections, and accounts of antiquities and curious things*, London, 1755, 519; see for the details J. van den Berg, 'A new suggestion for the year of birth of Thomas Morgan M.D. (d.1743)', *Notes and Queries*, 59 (2012) 180-2.

¹⁸ R. Williams, *A biographical dictionary of eminent Welshmen, from the earliest times to the present*, Llandovery, 1852, 342; B. Young, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: J.W. Yolton and others, eds., *The dictionary of eighteenth-century British philosophers*, Volume 2, Bristol, 1998, 641; and many others.

author marks him as Scottish.²⁰ Yet another author seems to know that he was born in France.²¹ Morgan family tradition pleads in favour of Wales.²² Certainty is not to be had; the oldest source refers to Bridgwater, which I think the most likely.²³

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§4: Education in Bridgwater in Somerset

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Joshua Toulmin tells us in his note about Thomas Morgan:

The pregnancy of his genius was conspicuous, and the Rev. John Moore, who kept an academy in that town for the education of youth intended for the ministry among the Dissenters, offered him tuition gratis, if friends could be found to discharge his board and other necessary expenses.²⁴

In 1695, Bridgwater was a town of about 2200 people. The times were difficult. Not long before, in 1685, terror had taken place in the county of Somerset. Four miles south east of Bridgwater in Westonzoyland - in the early morning of July 6th 1685 - the last battle on English soil was fought by the troops of the rebel James Scott, Duke of Monmouth and natural son of King Charles II, against the royal army of King James II. Many nonconformists fought in Monmouth's army. Afterwards, in the autumn of 1685, many rebels were executed, and this had a lasting moral effect on the region. A famous British historian described 'the general horror felt at the long rows of tarred and gibbeted Dissenters along the roadsides of Wessex'.²⁵ In these difficult times, the young Thomas Morgan grew up.

The dissenting academy of Bridgwater was founded by the Presbyterian minister John Moore, in 1688. From 1698, his son John Moore junior assisted him in the academy. It was for theological students only. The course took four years and it was open to Independents and Presbyterians. Four students received grants from the Presbyterian Fund in London. The pupils had to study philosophy, pursue preparatory studies and read a body of theological texts. In total some seventy-nine students at Bridgwater academy are known.²⁶

¹⁹ Chr. Schmitt, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas' in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, Volume 6, Herzberg, 1993, 117; J.V. Price, 'Introduction', in: (Th.Morgan), *The Moral Philosopher*, reprint, London, 1995, v; Busche, *Lexikon*, 470; Walters, *Religion*, 1501.

²⁰ B. Lohff, 'Lebenskraft als Symbolbegriff', in: E. Rudolph and I.O. Stamatescu, eds., *Von der Philosophie zur Wissenschaft. Cassirers Dialog mit der Naturwissenschaft*, (Cassirer Forschungen 3), Hamburg, 1997, 208-219 (213 note 20).

²¹ G. Stein, *Freethought in the United Kingdom and the commonwealth*, Westport, CT/London, 1981, 10.

²² (S. Merriman under the pseudonym) Hilaranthropos, (Memoir of Dr. Thomas Morgan), *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 102 (1832) 10-12 (10).

²³ (Toulmin), 'Biography', 258 note.

²⁴ (Toulmin), 'Biography', 258 note; Morgan never was an Anglican as mentioned by Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 472.

²⁵ G.M. Trevelyan, *History of England*, reissue, London, 1952, 467.

²⁶ H. McLachlan, 'Bridgewater academy 1688-1756?', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 8 (1943/1946) 93-97 (94-96); see the website of the *Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies*; this site has materials about in total more than 9750 students at dissenters' academies (retrieved 13.12.2017).

The contribution of these dissenting academies has been called the birth of modern education and a noteworthy milestone in the history of higher education in England. It has been said that the dissenting academies probably provided the best education available in England. Because the universities of Cambridge and Oxford became accessible only to members of the Established Church after 1662 some dissenting ministers sought an alternative for the education of new ministers. There were more than seventy such academies in England. Many ministers of Presbyterian and Independent churches met each other during their studies at these Non-conformist academies.²⁷

We do not know when Morgan entered this academy. The terminus post quem is the start of the academy in 1688, when he was tentatively about sixteen or seventeen years of age. But it could also have been later. Nor do we know when he left the academy. Probably he studied at Bridgwater academy in the nineties of the seventeenth century.²⁸

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§5: A Geneva connection?

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The name Thomas Morgan also appears in the registers of the University of Geneva on October 5th 1701. The editor of these registers interpreted this student Morgan as our subject.²⁹ But only the name appears without any other indication. Chronologically it is quite possible that Morgan studied in Geneva after his period in Bridgwater. But there is no further indication whatsoever that he went to Geneva. He himself gives no hint at all of a stay there. Knowing that the name of Morgan is very common in England and Wales, it makes little sense to identify the Geneva student Morgan with our subject on the basis of the name only. We need more detailed information, which for the moment is not available. But otherwise a gap exists in our knowledge about the life of Thomas Morgan in the first fifteen years of the eighteenth century. It is tempting to adopt the thesis of a Genevan intermezzo to fill this gap.

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§6: The dissenting community

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As Thomas Morgan was educated at a dissenting academy, it is important to look at the background of the dissenters. The dissenters were not dissenting from the doctrine of the Church of England. There were other points at stake. Richard Baxter, the most important theologian of the Non-conformists, stated it in 1660 in a request to the new king, Charles II:

²⁷ J.W. Ashley Smith, *The birth of modern education. The contribution of the dissenting academies 1660-1800*, London, 1954; N. Sykes, *The English religious tradition*, London, 1953, 57; G.R. Cragg, *The church and the age of reason 1648-1789*, (The Pelican History of the Church 4), reprint, Harmondsworth, 1970, 136; H. McLachlan, *English education under the test acts: being the history of the nonconformist academies 1662-1820*, Manchester, 1931; D. Coomer, *English dissent under the early Hanoverians*, London, 1946, 50.

²⁸ Nowadays, there is a dissenting academies project at the *Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies* in London with a publication forthcoming about the history of the dissenting academies in the British isles, 1660-1860, under the direction of Isabel Rivers. For the same project Mark Burden prepared *A biographical dictionary of tutors at the dissenters' private Academies, 1660-1720*, London, 2013; Registration records of Bridgwater academy do not exist (retrieved 13.12.2017).

²⁹ S. Stelling-Michaud, ed., *Le livre du recteur de l'académie de Genève (1559-1878)*, Volume 1, 'Le texte', Geneva, 1959, 261; Volume 4: 'Notices biographiques des étudiants H-M', Geneva, 1975, 592; the suggestion was already made by A. Chopard, 'Genève et les Anglais', *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève*, 7 (1939-40) 176-280 (195).

We humbly acquaint your majesty that we do not dissent from the doctrine of the Church of England expressed in the Articles and Homilies, but it is the controversial passages about government, liturgy and ceremonies, and some passages and phrases in the doctrinal part which is scrupled by those whose liberty is desired.³⁰

With the Act of Uniformity, promulgated in 1662, came an end to this unity. The Act of Uniformity of public prayers and administration of Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies: and for establishing the form of making, ordaining, and consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in the Church of England. This Act led to the great ejection of those who did not conform. It has been called the cataclysm. Nearly 2000 clergymen chose to leave the established church. That was probably one-fifth of the total clergy. It has been calculated that about 1760 incumbents were ejected from their livings and it has been characterized as the parting of the ways.³¹

The Test Act of 1673 made reception of Holy Communion in the Church of England a necessary qualification for Government posts and public office.³² It meant that many dissenters had to look for other ways of gaining prosperity in life. Many of them gained important places in commerce and trade. We may here recall Trevelyan's words: 'While religion divided, trade united the nation'.³³

With the coming of William III and Mary the Toleration Act was promulgated in 1689: An Act for exempting their Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws. 'Henceforward a man might be a citizen of England without being a member of the English Church'.³⁴ After the Toleration Act of 1689, of the thousand meeting-houses which sprang up at that time, over 500 were Presbyterian, about half that number Independents, and the remainder Baptists, Friends, and minor bodies. The meeting-house was the focus of Non-conformist life.³⁵ There they found not only a place of consolation for their souls, but also men and women in equal social situations, especially in the times of hardship, which were to come again in the reign of Queen Anne.

Under Queen Anne, life again worsened for the Non-conformists. During the Sacheverell riots in March 1710, several dissenting chapels in the capital were attacked, sacked and

³⁰ Quoted by Coomer, *English dissent*, 3.

³¹ See for a modern version of the text of the Act F.G. Healy, *Rooted in faith. Three centuries of nonconformity 1662-1962*, London, 1961, 125-144; A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England: their rise, decline, and revival*, London, 1889, 389 note 1; J.H. Colligan, *Eighteenth century nonconformity*, London, 1915, 2; C.G. Bolam and J. Goring, 'Cataclysm', in: C.G. Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians from Elizabethan Puritanism to modern Unitarianism*, London, 1968, 73-92 (84); Sykes, *The English religious tradition*, 50-1; see also A.F.P. Sell, ed., *The great ejection of 1662: its antecedents, aftermath, and ecumenical significance*, Eugene, OR, 2012.

³² Healy, *Rooted in faith*, 92.

³³ G.M. Trevelyan, *English social history*, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1974, 310.

³⁴ H.F. Russell Smith, *The theory of religious liberty in the reign of Charles II and James II*, (Cambridge Historical Essays 21), Cambridge, 1911, 2.

³⁵ Drysdale, *History*, 531; Cragg, *The church*, 135.

demolished by crowds, shouting “High Church and Sacheverell”.³⁶ Henry Sacheverell advocated in his sermons the high church cause. In 1711, the Act against Occasional Conformity was stipulated: ‘All persons in places of profit and trust, and all the common-council men in corporations, who should be at any meeting for divine Worship in which the Common Prayer was not used ... should upon conviction forfeit their place of trust or profit’.³⁷ The Schism Act of 1714 decreed that no-one was allowed to keep school or to act as a tutor while not conforming to the Church of England.³⁸ Bridgwater was one of those academies where the lessons were suspended. Under King George I, both these acts were suspended and in 1718 repealed.

After the accession to the throne of George I of the House of Hanover dissenters again suffered from Jacobite mobs during the year 1715 in London and in the country. In the country at least thirty Non-conformist places of worship were attacked during June, July and August 1715.³⁹ As a result, the Riot Act was promulgated on August 1st 1715.

In the list of dissenting chapels made by John Evans in 1715-16, a total of 1107 dissenting chapels in England and 43 in Wales were calculated.⁴⁰ Of these, 247 were Baptists. Somerset had 55 dissenting chapels and Wiltshire 20. A modern computation stated that there were in the early eighteenth century some 338120 dissenters, that is 6,21% of the total population of England. Of which 179350 were Presbyterians and 59940 Independents.⁴¹

But things were not so simple. There were complaints about the decline of the dissenting community in the beginning of the 18th century. As early as 1712, the journalist Daniel Defoe considered the interest of the dissenters to have declined. In 1730, the young dissenter Strickland Gough published anonymously his pamphlet *An enquiry into the causes of the decay of the dissenting interest*, in which he argued that the Salters’ Hall Conference had damaged the dissenting interest. The decay can be seen in the numbers. A Presbyterian historian calculated that in 1772 the Presbyterian and Independent congregations numbered together only 702.⁴² But at that time the Methodist movement was already in full flight.

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§7: Independent preacher in Bruton in Somerset

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³⁶ J. Stevenson, *Popular disturbances in England 1700-1870*, London, 1979, 56; see on the riots G. Holmes, ‘The Sacheverell riots: the crowd and the church in early eighteenth-century London’, *Past and Present*, 72 (1976) 55-85.

³⁷ Quoted by Healy, *Rooted in faith*, 93.

³⁸ Healy, *Rooted in faith*, 93.

³⁹ Stevenson, *Popular disturbances*, 20.

⁴⁰ H.S. Skeats, *A History of the free churches of England from a.d. 1688 - a.d. 1851*, London, 1868, 280.

⁴¹ Quoted by A.P.F. Sell, ‘Introduction’, in: A.P.F. Sell, and others, *Protestant nonconformist texts: the eighteenth century*, Aldershot, 2006, 3; the figures also in C. Haydon, ‘Religious minorities in England’, in: H.T. Dickinson, ed., *A companion to eighteenth-century Britain*, Oxford, 2002, 241-51 (242 table 1).

⁴² C.S. Carter, *The English church in the eighteenth century*, London, 1910, 117; (D. Defoe), *Wise as serpents: being an enquiry into the present circumstances of the dissenters*, London, 1712, 17; J. Goring, ‘The break-up of the old dissent’, in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 175-218 (175); see for the Salters’ Hall Conference Chapter 2 § 2 below; Drysdale, *History*, 532.

In 1715, we find Morgan acting as an Independent preacher at Bruton in Somerset. For how long we do not know.⁴³ Bruton is located in the south-eastern part of Somerset twelve miles south west of Frome. It was a small market town with a long tradition. The population reached the number of 1631 persons in the year 1801.⁴⁴ The only source for Morgan's stay in Bruton is the list of Presbyterian and Independent chapels made by the Presbyterian minister and historian Dr. John Evans.⁴⁵ Many authors erroneously write 'Burton' in stead of Bruton, and one of Morgan's biographers even called it 'Boston'.⁴⁶

From Bruton, Morgan sought ordination as a minister in Presbyterian surroundings. By this means he looked for promotion in his position. The former librarian of the Dr. Williams Library in London provides a succinct description of the usual practice for a man intending to enter the ministry at that time: he was first to be licensed to preach; thereafter he was expected to proceed to ordination in due course or to take up full responsibility for a pastorate.⁴⁷

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§8: Differences between Presbyterians and Independents

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"Presbyterian" has meant many things in the English religious tradition. It has been described by the Presbyterian historian Alexander Hutton Drysdale as follows: if Puritanism was the feeling of which Protestantism was the argument, we may add that Presbyterianism was its organized expression. It is the system of church government by elders, or presbyters, in which the parity of the preaching pastors is taken for granted, and the church government in the hands of a council of elders, and an organic union of different churches by a synod.

In general, it can be said that Presbyterians were more conservative in their politics, and more moderate in their theology than the Independents.⁴⁸ There was a difference in the view of the ministerial status: 'With Independency, a minister pre-supposes a local church first; whereas

⁴³ Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 74-5, seems to know that he started in 1715 in Bruton; McLachlan, 'Bridgewater', 95 stipulates 1716.

⁴⁴ *British History Online*, retrieved 13.12.2017.

⁴⁵ Th.S. James, *The history of the litigation and legislation respecting Presbyterian chapels and charities in England and Ireland between 1816 and 1849*, London, 1867, 643-696: 'List of the Presbyterian and Independent chapels ... with the name of the ministers ... between the years 1717 and 1729, prepared by Dr. John Evans', (693); A. Gordon, sub voce 'Bowden, John', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 6, London, 1886, 40.

⁴⁶ L. Stephen, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 39, London, 1894, 35-6 (36), J.H. Colligan, *The Arian movement in England*, Manchester, 1913, 137; McLachlan, 'Bridgewater', 95; Hohlwein, *Religion*, 1135; E.C. Mossner, sub voce 'Morgan', in: *The encyclopedia of philosophy*, Volume 5, New York, 1967, 394-5 (394); P. Vernière, *Lumières ou clair-obscur*, Paris, 1987, 150; J.M. Vienne, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle*, Volume 3/1: *Les oeuvres philosophiques: philosophie occidentale*, Paris, 1992, 1359; Schmitt, *Kirchenlexikon*, 117; Price, 'Introduction', vi; Busche, *Lexikon*, 470; A.G. Debus, *Chemistry and medical debate van Helmont to Boerhaave*, Canton, 2001, 178; A.P.F. Sell, "'The gospel its own witness". Deism, Thomas Paine and Andrew Fuller', in: R. Glenn Wooden and others, eds., *You will be my witness: a festschrift in honor of the Reverend Dr. Allison A. Trites*, Macon, GA, 2003, 188-229 (203); Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 208.

⁴⁷ R. Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 113-174 (152 note 1).

⁴⁸ Coomer, *Dissent*, 8; Drysdale, *History*, 5-7; Colligan, *Nonconformity*, 8.

in Presbyterianism, the ministry is pre-supposed prior to a church'.⁴⁹ There was also a difference in church membership and its organization. The Independents placed all power and control in the church meeting, while the Presbyterian congregation did not hold such a thing as a church meeting, but concentrated all authority in the presbytery.⁵⁰ Finally there was a difference in spiritual ambience:

A casual attender at worship in an Independent meeting-house would probably notice little difference between Independents and Presbyterians, but he could not be long associated with the former without finding that he was in a different atmosphere. For this was a "gathered church". The congregation was not assembled because they were members of a community ... but because they were individuals convincedly Christian and the subjects of a definite religious experience.⁵¹

Morgan's transition from an Independent community to Presbyterianism is an indication of his religious development towards a more moderate view of the Christian message.

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§9: Presbyterian ordination in Frome in Somerset

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On Thursday September 6th 1716 Morgan was ordained in nearby Frome in the eastern part of Somerset by the Presbyterian minister John Bowden.⁵² Frome, thirteen miles south of Bath, was in the early 18th century an important centre of the wool trade with a population of about ten thousand people. The published edition of the proceedings of Morgan's ordination is the first fully documented and dated source of his public life. It all happened in Rook Lane Chapel in Frome, built by James Pope in 1707, and now beautifully restored.⁵³ John Bowden was for a long time active in Frome, had many hearers, and was according to a memorial tablet - restored in 1862 - 'a learned and serious man, an eloquent preacher, and a considerable poet'.⁵⁴ The preacher on the occasion, Nicholas Billingsley, was a Presbyterian

⁴⁹ Drysdale, *History*, 449; the same opinion one finds in the general literature about the dissenters: Coomer, *Dissent*, 10; R. Thomas, 'Parties in Nonconformity', in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 93-112 (94); M.R. Watts, *The dissenters from the reformation to the French revolution*, reprint, Oxford, 2002, 317.

⁵⁰ Drysdale, *History*, 527 note 2.

⁵¹ Coomer, *Dissent*, 16.

⁵² *A sermon preach'd at the ordination of Mr. Thomas Morgan, at Frome, in the County of Somerset, on Thursday, Sept. 6th, 1716. By Nicholas Billingsley. With Mr. Morgan's confession of faith; the questions and his answers on that occasion; and the exhortation to him at the close. By the Reverend Mr. John Bowden. Publish'd at the request of the ministers present at the assembly. With a preface by the Reverend Mr. Henry Chandler*, London, printed for John Clark, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheapside, 1717. (Merriman), (Memoir), 10, Williams, *A biographical dictionary*, 342, Price, 'Introduction', vi, viii, and Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" and "Christian Deism" ', 106, mistakenly note 1717 as the year of ordination.

⁵³ According to Chr. Stell, 'Rook Lane Chapel, Frome', *The Chapels Society Newsletter*, no.9, December 1993, 114-5, Rook Lane Chapel 'long stood a shabby and disgracefully vandalized monument'; Photographs of Rook Lane Chapel before the restoration in D. Davie, *A gathered church. The literature of the English dissenting interest, 1700-1930*, (The Clark lectures 1976), London and Henley, 1978, illustrations 4a and 6; photographs after the restoration on the website of *English Heritage*, retrieved 13.12.2017.

⁵⁴ Davie, *A gathered church*, illustration 1.

minister at Ashwick in the Eastern part of Somerset between 1699 and 1729.⁵⁵ He preached about 2 Corinthians 5:1-2:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness; nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

After answering ten questions Thomas Morgan delivered a strong Trinitarian confession. Henry Chandler, who wrote the preface to the published edition of the ordination, was an Independent minister at Bath.⁵⁶

The London printer John Clark had much success with this edition. A second edition – corrected – appeared in 1717 and a third edition was announced in 1719 and in 1720 under the title *The conduct of ministers ... in a sermon preached at Frome ... at the ordination of Mr. Thomas Morgan. By the Rev. Mr. N. Billingsley*.⁵⁷

Morgan sought this ordination because he was chosen to become a dissenting minister at Marlborough in Wiltshire, where he administered the sacrament for the first time on November 4th 1716, according to the indication of the local historian James Waylen.⁵⁸ He was ordained in Frome, but he would never act as a minister there, as some scholars maintain.⁵⁹

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§10: Dissenting Minister in Marlborough in Wiltshire

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Wiltshire lies east of Somerset in the south of England. It is almost entirely an agricultural and pastoral county. It was the traditional land of flocks of sheep and the wool industry. Here also the rural setting is clear in the many observations which Thomas Davis, the estate manager of Longleat House, near Warminster in Western Wiltshire, made in the agricultural survey of this county and which were published by his son Thomas Davis in 1811: ‘The principal

⁵⁵ His grave can still be found in the graveyard near the Church of St. James in Ashwick, a village seven miles East of Wells, *English Heritage*, retrieved 29.12.2017.

⁵⁶ Price, ‘Introduction’, v; and Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 149, note incorrectly that Chandler preached at the occasion.

⁵⁷ The third edition was announced by the printer in M. Tomkins, *The case of mr. Martin Tomkins*, London, 1719, 136; (J. Hallett), *The unity of God not inconsistent with the divinity of Christ*, London, 1720, 56. It was indicated as ‘lately published’ in N. Billingsley, *Rational and Christian principles the best rules of conduct*, London, 1721, 127.

⁵⁸ J. Waylen, *A history, military and municipal, of the town (otherwise called city) of Marlborough*, London, 1854, 484.

⁵⁹ Among them J.M. Robertson, *A history of freethought ancient and modern to the period of the French revolution*, 4th edition, Volume 2, London, 1936, 743; A.G. Grayling and others, eds., *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy*, Oxford, 2006, sub voce ‘Morgan, Thomas’; Young, *Dictionary*, 641; Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, 665.

productions of the county ... are corn, chiefly wheat and barley; cheese and butter; fat calves; fat cattle and sheep; fat pigs'.⁶⁰

The town of Marlborough lies in the Upper Kennet valley in Eastern Wiltshire on the major route between London and Bath, the old Bath route. The name of Marlborough is already mentioned in the Domesday Book. Marlborough Grammar School was founded in 1550 and the town suffered a great fire on April 28th 1653. It had pretty good markets for corn and cheese.⁶¹ It was a busy town with much traffic. Marlborough was a borough town of great coaching importance in former days. The diarist Samuel Pepys stayed the night at the White Hart in Marlborough at June 15th 1668, characterizing it as a pretty fair town for a street or two, and noting in his diary that five different coaches came that day from Bath alone. Marlborough had many shopkeepers and the journalist Daniel Defoe wrote about Marlborough: 'This is an antient town and, at present, has a pretty good shop-keeping trade, but not much of the manufacturing part'.⁶² In the year 1676, the recorded population was 3200 among which about 250 dissenters. The dissenting community of Marlborough was formed when the Vicar William Hughes was ejected in 1662. He afterwards started a large school. This community built a new Presbyterian Meeting House in 1706. Marlborough was then the residence of many very opulent and respectable Presbyterians. The names of other ministers are known, such as John Worth and Edward Morris who deserted in 1713.⁶³

In Marlborough Morgan married Mary, the fourth daughter of the grocer and brewer Nathaniel Merriman and his wife Mary Hunt. Merriman was one of the principal supporters of the dissenting interest in Marlborough. Morgan and his wife had three children, one son and two daughters. The son was named after his grandfather, Nathaniel, and settled later in Jamaica. This Nathaniel married a planter's widow, with whom he had an only son, named Thomas after his grandfather, and who was educated in England. Thomas Morgan was very active during his years in Marlborough. We know that he preached in 1720 an orthodox funeral sermon on the Bible text 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Corinthians 15:54) for Michael Foster, a respected attorney at Marlborough and father of Sir Michael Foster, one of the judges of the court of King's Bench.⁶⁴

Morgan also wrote many texts in the pamphlet war that surrounded the dissenter's conference in London known as the Salters' Hall Conference about sufficiency or insufficiency of the

⁶⁰ A.G. Bradley, *Wiltshire* (Cambridge County Geographies), Cambridge, 1909, 4; G.D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire woollen industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, 2nd edition, Abingdon, 1965; Th. Davis, *General view of the agriculture of Wiltshire*, London, 1811, x.

⁶¹ Davis, *General view*, 244.

⁶² Bradley, *Wiltshire*, 143; R. Latham, ed., *The shorter Pepys*, Berkeley, 1985, 926; (D. Defoe), *A tour thro' the whole island of Great-Britain*, volume 2, London, 1725, 51.

⁶³ Waylen, *A history*, 302-3, 484; R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, London, 1962, 61 note 1, 86; J.W. Gale, *Marlborough Congregational church aforetime known as the independent chapel*, Marlborough, 1957, 10; Merriman, (Memoir), 10.

⁶⁴ Merriman, (Memoir), 10; Waylen, *A history*, 484, 509; J. Hunter, *Familiae minorum gentium*, ed. J.W. Clay, volume 3, London, 1895, MS.494, 1114-1117 (1115); I. Jones, *The descendants of Thomas Merriman de Wyttneye*, s.l.s.a., 43-4; M.Dodson, *The life of Sir Michael Foster, Knt*, London, 1811, 1 note a, with part of the sermon; the deceased Michael Foster had contributed the sum of £15 to the construction of the chapel in 1706, according to Waylen, *A history*, 484.

Scriptures and specifically about subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁵ The first seven pamphlets written by Morgan were all printed by James Roberts, at the Oxford Arms in Warwick Lane in London. Roberts was one of the most important booksellers in the first half of the 18th century.⁶⁶ Afterwards, Morgan worked with other London printers, such as John Peele, John Noon, John Morley, and others. From 1726 till 1730, he worked together with the printers John Osborn and Thomas Longman at the Ship in Paternoster-Row. Osborn and Longman published lists of the books, which were printed by and available for sale from them, in which various titles by Thomas Morgan appear. A similar list exists by the printer John Noon.⁶⁷

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§11: Dismissal from the ministry

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At some point in time, Morgan was dismissed from his ministry in Marlborough for heresy. There has been much discussion about the date of his dismissal. Some date the dismissal in 1720.⁶⁸ Others think it happened soon after 1720.⁶⁹ Still others opt for the year 1726.⁷⁰ From the fact that he lived in Marlborough up till 1727 it has been deducted that he was dismissed in 1726 or 1727.⁷¹ In my view, Morgan was dismissed from the ministry towards the end of 1724, as we can learn from the autobiography of William Whiston. There, Whiston writes:

⁶⁵ All reprinted in Th. Morgan, *A collection of tracts relating to the right of private judgment, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the terms of church communion, upon Christian principles: occasion'd by the late Trinitarian controversy. Now revised and published altogether*, London, 1726, and dated 'Marlborough, May 18, 1720', Nov. 16, 1721', 'March 14, 1722', 'May 1722', 'May 13, 1724', see p.254, 322, 350, 439, 488. See further Chapter 2.

⁶⁶ On Roberts see K.T. Winkler, *Handwerk und Markt: Druckerhandwerk, Vertriebswesen und Tagesschrifttum in London 1695-1750*, Stuttgart, 1993, 407-23; 384: 'der in den Jahren 1714 bis 1740 über das grösste Geschäftsvolumen verfügte'. On Roberts and other booksellers see M. Treadwell, 'London trade publishers 1675-1750', *The Library*, 6th series, Volume 4 (1982) 99-141. The Oxford Arms still existed in 1875, photographed by A. & J. Bool, and preserved in the collection of the *Royal Academy of Arts*, but the building was demolished in 1878 (retrieved 13.12.2017).

⁶⁷ Winkler, *Handwerk*, 424-32; N.N., *Books printed for, and sold by J. Osborn and T. Longman, at the Ship in Pater-Noster Row*, s.l.s.a., 10; see on Longman A. Briggs, *A history of Longmans and their books 1724-1990, longevity in publishing*, London, 2008; N.N., *Books printed for John Noon, at the White-Hart near Mercer's-Chapel, Cheapside*, s.l.s.a., number lix.

⁶⁸ Mossner, *The encyclopedia*, 394; B. Cottret, *Le Christ des Lumières. Jésus de Newton à Voltaire 1660-1780*, Paris, 1990, 111.

⁶⁹ Williams, *A biographical dictionary*, 342, Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 208; Reventlow, 'English deism', 867; Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 148.

⁷⁰ D. Patrick, 'Two English forerunners of the Tübingen School: Thomas Morgan and John Toland', *Theological Review*, 14 (1877) 562-601 (564); E. Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des Europäischen Denkens*, Volume 1, Gütersloh, 1949, 331; J.C. Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in antiquity*, (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 251), Tübingen, 2010, 293.

⁷¹ Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 32: 'Morgan's steadfast Arianism cost him his congregation in either 1726 or 1727'.

As I went to Bath and Bristol, in the year 1724, I passed through Marlborough, and there met with one Mr. Morgan, who was then a dissenting minister there; but soon left off that employment, and, so far as appeared, because he was become one of us that are called Arians.⁷²

The last time Morgan's name appears in the registers of the dissenting community in Marlborough happened in 1724.⁷³ He was not dismissed from the Presbyterian ministry by order of his superior as is contended.⁷⁴ In 1725, his successor, the Presbyterian Samuel Billingsley, who had also studied in Bridgwater, and was a nephew of the already named Nicholas Billingsley, was ordained by John Bowden.⁷⁵

At the end of the 18th century, Cornelius Winter was minister in Marlborough from 1778 till 1788 and he reorganized the church of Marlborough on Congregational principles.⁷⁶

Apparently, Morgan did not leave Marlborough after his dismissal from the ministry, but stayed for a while under the protection of his family. He lived in Marlborough at least until the end of March 1727, as is clear from his published pamphlets. Probably, he was financially supported by his father-in-law, because in his last will, dated December 7th 1741, Nathaniel Merriman discharged his son in law Doctor Morgan all the money he owed him.⁷⁷

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§12: Arianism among the Presbyterians

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⁷² W. Whiston, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Mr. William Whiston*, 2nd edition, London, 1753, 271; Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, 665, erroneously writes that he was dismissed from his living at Frome.

⁷³ Waylen, *A history*, 484; the archivist of Wiltshire Council, Steven Hobbs FSA, wrote to me on November 18th 2017: 'Unfortunately the records seen by Waylen have not survived and we have no material on the congregation in Marlborough in the 18th century'.

⁷⁴ A. Gerdmar, *Roots of theological anti-Semitism: German biblical interpretation and the Jews*, (Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20), Leiden, 2009, 29: 'Thomas Morgan's dangerous theological views caused his superior to dismiss him from the Presbyterian ministry'. It is the local Presbytery, and not some kind of (Lutheran) Superintendent, who decides about the ministry.

⁷⁵ J. Bowden, *A sermon preach'd at the ordination of Mr. Samuel Billingsley at Marlborough in Wiltshire*, London, 1725; James, *The history*, 682; Joseph Dodson was dissenting minister in Marlborough around the year 1732; and a certain Mr. Graham came in 1746.

⁷⁶ Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism*, 150; see on Winter W. Jay, *Memoirs of the life and character of the late Rev. Cornelius Winter*, New York, 1811; Waylen, *A history*, 486-93. Therefore, Marlborough was not incorporated in the book of the Unitarian minister and mayor of Bath, Jerom Murch, *A history of the Presbyterian and general Baptist churches in the west of England*, London, 1835, when he described the Wiltshire churches. This community existed until the late twentieth century, when it merged with the local Methodist church. The founder of the Methodist movement John Wesley preached in Marlborough on June 10th 1745 and on June 22nd 1747, but only in 1811 was a Methodist chapel certified in Marlborough at Oxford Street by George Pocock, one of Wesley's friends.

⁷⁷ Th. Morgan, *A letter to mr. Thomas Chubb, occasioned by his two letters to a friend in vindication of human nature*, London, 1727, 36: dated 'Marlborough, March 9, 1726-7'; 'Last will and testament' of Nathaniel Merriman, dated December 7th 1741; 'This will was proved at London' February 28th, 1742-3 (National Archive: Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; PROB 11/724/199) (retrieved 13.12.2017).

The reason for Morgan's dismissal is mostly sought in his Arianism, which in the 18th century came close to non-trinitarianism and was seen as heretical. There is much discussion about this trend to Arianism among the Presbyterians of the 18th century. Arianism has been called an archetypal heresy, and we have been told of Presbyterianism's insidious tendency to Arianism.⁷⁸

Otherwise it has been stated that the trend among the Presbyterians was not so much towards Arianism as to Arminianism. Among other things, Arminianism asked for the unimpaired freedom of the will of human beings. But it is also admitted that many Presbyterians may in fact have been Arians.⁷⁹

According to Whiston, the heresy for which Morgan was dismissed was Arianism and most modern authors agree.⁸⁰ But we may quote Morgan himself in a letter to Sir Richard Blackmore in 1722: 'I would not have you conclude, that I am here declaring for Arianism; but I am willing to put my self in the place of an Arian for once, to try the force of your argument'.⁸¹ Whatever he said about it, it was sufficient for his dismissal. Afterwards, Arianism became for some orthodox critics the highway to Deism, or at least next door to Deism.⁸² These critics could have named the case of Thomas Morgan as an example of their feelings.

It cannot be claimed that Morgan was dismissed from Marlborough for Deism, as some authors do.⁸³ Deistic ideas developed only much later in his life. But there was another interesting fact that possibly led to his dismissal.

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§13: A complaint made in the House of Lords against Thomas Morgan

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Since the expiring of the Licensing Act in 1696, every Englishman could print or publish whatever he wanted. But he could be called to account for it on a charge of libel or sedition.⁸⁴ Such a complaint was made against Morgan in the House of Lords at the end of November 1724. In the session of Monday, November 23rd of the said House,

complaint was made to the House of a printed news paper, entituled "*The British Journal*, Saturday, November 21st, 1724". And several passages, contained in the said paper, being

⁷⁸ Colligan, *The Arian movement*; M.F. Wiles, *An archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries*, Oxford, 1996, 62-164: 'The rise and fall of British Arianism', especially 134-56.

⁷⁹ Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', 172; Goring, 'The break-up of the old dissent', 179.

⁸⁰ Among them Hirsch, *Geschichte*, 331; Hohlwein, *Religion*, 1135; Schmitt, *Kirchenlexikon*, 117; J. Rohls, *Philosophie und Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen, 2002, 370; Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 32.

⁸¹ Th. Morgan, *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore; occasioned by his book, entituled, modern Arians unmask'd*, London, 1722, 33.

⁸² H. Mattison, *A Scriptural defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, or a check to modern Arianism*, New York, 1846, 81; R. Reeve, *Arianism next door to Deism*, London, 1802.

⁸³ Among them Robertson, *A history of freethought*, 743; Chopard, 'Genève et les Anglais', 195; Grayling and others, eds., *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy*, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas'; Young, *Dictionary*, 641.

⁸⁴ Trevelyan, *English social history*, 277.

read: it is resolved, that the said news paper, is a scandalous libel, highly reflecting upon the Christian religion.

A committee was appointed to inquire into the matter. A week later, on Monday, November 30th, the President of this committee, Francis North, 2nd baron Guilford, reported to the House. He told the House that they had sent for the printers Thomas Warner and Samuel Aris of Creed-Lane and the proprietor and bookseller Thomas Woodward of Fleetstreet. The last-named admitted

that he received the letter complained of, out of the country, by the post, that he did not know whose hand-writing it was; but owned, that he had received other letters of the same hand-writing, and had sent answers acknowledging the receipt of such letters; which he directed "To Mr. Thomas Morgan, at Marlborough", whom he believes the person who sent him that letter.

Therefore, the House ordered that the said Thomas Morgan 'do forthwith attend this House, in order to be examined, touching of the matter of the said complaint'. On Monday, December 7th, the House 'received an affidavit made by Richard Hunt of Marlborough, post-master, signifying he had duly served the said Morgan with the said order'.⁸⁵

The *British Journal* was an English weekly newspaper that appeared from September 1722 till January 1728, and afterwards as the *British Journal or the Censor*, and at last as the *British Journal or the Traveller* till March 1731. It was printed by Thomas Warner.⁸⁶ I have not been able to locate the said number of this paper and the article or letter referred to in the complaint. The documents of the House do not note that Morgan ever appeared to be examined. But the case - 'highly reflecting upon the Christian religion' - was probably sufficient for the Presbytery to dismiss Morgan from the Marlborough congregation. We may conclude also that he was active as a writer in newspapers such as the *British Journal*.

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§14: Study of medicine

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In those years – but unfortunately, we do not know exactly when - Morgan managed to study medicine, because in 1725 he published his *Philosophical principles of medicine*, dated Marlborough, May 10th 1725, which he dedicated to Sir Hans Sloane, President of the Royal College of Physicians. This dedication shows that Morgan was looking for promotion in life: 'The author with great modesty desires, that what he offers may be taken in part as payment for favours already receiv'd, and at the same be look'd upon as a valuable consideration for those that are yet behind'.⁸⁷

What were these favours already received? We do not know. Peter Nisbett, one of Morgan's opponents in the 1720s, wrote already in 1723 about him: 'a man of sense and sincerity, and (as I am told) a little piece of a physician too'.⁸⁸ From 1724, Morgan called himself a doctor

⁸⁵ *Journals of the House of Lords*, Volume 22: 1722-1726, 352, 360-361, 365, November 23rd, 30th, December 7th 1724 (*British History Online*, retrieved 13.12.2017).

⁸⁶ See on Warner and his business Winkler, *Handwerk*, 432-447 (446).

⁸⁷ Th. Morgan, *Philosophical principles of medicine*, London, 1725, iii.

⁸⁸ P. Nisbett, *Comprehension, more properly than enthusiasm, in distress, proved by Mr. Thomas Morgan, a dissenting teacher*, London, 1723, 15; Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" ', 106, erroneously makes him a physician only from 1730 onwards.

of medicine.⁸⁹ We know with some probability that he gained this title at the University of Glasgow because he is mentioned as such in the registers of Marischal College at the University of Aberdeen in 1738. On June 26th 1738, Thomas Morgan, M.D. of Glasgow, presented together with John Allen, M.D. of Aberdeen, medical practitioner in Bridgwater in Somerset, and with Andrew Hooke, M.D. of Glasgow, testimonial in Aberdeen at the ceremony of the graduation as doctor of medicine of John Cunningham of Falmouth in Cornwall.⁹⁰ We may assume that Morgan met Allen during his study in Bridgwater. In the circle of his wife's family, the Merriman family, there were younger members who also studied medicine in Scotland, especially in Edinburgh, such as Samuel Merriman, grandson of the grocer Nathaniel Merriman.⁹¹ Two great-grandsons of Nathaniel also studied medicine: John Merriman and Samuel Merriman, one of the busiest of the London obstetricians in the late 18th century. This Samuel Merriman was the author of the memoir of Dr. Thomas Morgan in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1832.⁹²

The tradition of dissenters within the medical profession already started much earlier. This development has been sketched since the 17th century. As they had no admission to Cambridge and Oxford, medical students among the dissenters looked to Scotland. After 1750, a growing number of Englishmen made their way to Scotland to study medicine. So in the 18th century especially Scottish M.D.'s flooded the provincial and London practices.⁹³ The book *Philosophical principles of medicine* was already delayed, as Morgan wrote, by 'my other affairs, and my state of health', which is an indication that he had studied medicine long before. In this edition of the *Philosophical principles of medicine*, we find a long dedicatory poem by Samuel Bowden, physician in Frome, and dated October 10th 1724. This Samuel Bowden was probably a brother of the Reverend John Bowden. The poem was pretty popular because a revised edition was published separately in 1726, and the style is typically panegyric for the time:

⁸⁹ The title page of Th. Morgan, *A second postscript to enthusiasm in distress*, London, 1724, has the abbreviation M.D. after the name Morgan. Many authors believe that he used the M.D. only from 1726, among them Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 149; Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 208; Reventlow, 'English deism', 867.

⁹⁰ P.J. Anderson, ed., *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis, Selections from the records of the Marischal College and University 1593-1860*, volume 2: Officers, graduates and alumni, Aberdeen, 1898, 113; see for the details J. van den Berg, 'Where and when did Thomas Morgan acquire his medical doctorate?', *Notes and Queries*, 60 (2013) 556-8; Emma Yan, the duty archivist at Glasgow University, wrote to me on December, 6th, 2017: 'I am afraid we were unable to find any record of Thomas Morgan as a medical student at this University. ... it is still possible that he took classes here and paid a fee directly to the professor, but left no written record behind'.

⁹¹ G. Goodwin, sub voce 'Merriman, Samuel', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 37, Oxford, 2004, 915.

⁹² According to Frank Forster, quoted by N.N., 'Section of medical history in the British medical association', *Medical History*, 4 (1960) 81; D. Brunton, sub voce 'Merriman, Samuel', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 37, Oxford, 2004, 915-16; N.N., 'Samuel Merriman', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, new series 39 (1853) 207-09 (209).

⁹³ W. Birken, 'The dissenting tradition in English medicine of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Medical History*, 39 (1995) 197-218; J.F. Kett, 'Provincial medical practice in England 1730-1815, *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 19 (1964) 17-29 (24); Th.M. Brown, 'From mechanism to vitalism in eighteenth-century English physiology', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 7 (1974) 179-216 (215).

For this shall future ages sound your fame,
 And distant climates echo with your name;
 Your work it self will its admirers raise,
 And men that breathe by you, shall breathe your praise.⁹⁴

It appeared also in the collected poems of Samuel Bowden, published in 1754.⁹⁵ Morgan signed in 1726 together with John Middleton, physician at Bath, and Robert Chauncy M.D., a testimonial to John Stirling, the Principal of Glasgow University, on behalf of Bowden.⁹⁶

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§15: Visits to London

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From time to time Morgan visited London. Some scholars have suggested that Voltaire during his stay in England met Morgan in 1726, but there is no proof to sustain that suggestion.⁹⁷ The Scottish historian Robert Wodrow refers in 1727 to a casual meeting of Morgan at a London bookseller's shop with the preacher William Smith, son of Samuel Smith in Belfast. The text is outspoken:

Mr.Morgan once dissenting minister at Marlburou, turned Socinian and Doctor of medicin, and hearing them name him, asked if he was the knouen Mr.Morgan once of Marlbro? And finding it was, invited him to a glass of wine; the conversation turned on the Non-subscribers in Ireland. Mr.Morgan asked the other how things were going, Mr.Smith said the heats were great as to subscribing. "What hinders them", said Morgan: "Have they real difficulty as to the doctrine they once subscribed?" "No", said the other, "they do not declare that, but keep themselves in the generall against humane composures, and imposition, and confessions." Mr.Morgan said, "That will never do their business! They ought to do as I do; deny three to be one, and one to be three, and they will come to some account; But they will never do good as long as they wrap themselves in the clouds, and keep in these generals." This shoacked Mr.Smith.⁹⁸

It was clearly a shock for the Reverend Smith. Morgan was already a long way from his Trinitarian confession in Frome.

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§16: Medical practitioner in Bristol

⁹⁴ Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, xxxvii, xxxix-xlvi; J.M. Scott, sub voce 'Bowden, Samuel', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 6, London, 1886, 41; Ch. Rosenberg, 'Samuel Bowden of Frome, Somersetshire', *Notes and Queries*, 173 (1937) 344-5 (345); see about Bowden's poetry: H.N. Fairchild, *Religious trends in English poetry*, New York, 1942, 55-8; S. Bowden, *A poem on the new method of treating physick. Inscribed to Dr. Morgan on his Philosophical Principles of Medicine*, London, 1726, 11.

⁹⁵ S. Bowden, *Poems on various subjects*, Bath, 1754, 379-84.

⁹⁶ University of Glasgow MS Gen 207 item 112 (retrieved 13.12.2017).

⁹⁷ See for the details J. van den Berg, 'Did Voltaire meet the deist Thomas Morgan (d.1743) during his stay in England in 1726?', *Notes and Queries*, 57 (2010) 108-09.

⁹⁸ R. Wodrow, *Analecta: or, materials for a history of remarkable providences; mostly related to Scotch ministers and Christians*, Volume 3, Edinburgh, 1843, 467.

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From Marlborough, Morgan left for Bristol sometime before September 1727.⁹⁹ Bristol is situated between Somerset and Gloucestershire in South-Western England and had county status since 1373. When Thomas Morgan came to live in Bristol in the summer of 1727 he encountered a busy city. By 1735, its population was calculated at 33000. It was the second city in the realm after London. The 18th century was Bristol's golden age. Bristol was a harbour city, which became notorious in the 18th century for its slave trade.¹⁰⁰

It has been said by William Whiston that Morgan worked in Bristol as a medical practitioner among the Quakers. After his dismissal from Marlborough '... he soon fell upon the study of physic. ... When he was going to practice physick at Bristol, among the rich Quakers there, he wrote a pamphlet for such assistance of good men, as much as might recommend himself to them'.¹⁰¹ There have been many practitioners in Bristol. A medical historian calculated for the first decade of the 18th century one practitioner to every 163 people in the City of Bristol. It is not clear whether Morgan worked with success as a practitioner. Another medical historian commented: 'The rank-and-file of medical practitioners throughout the country was not of high type. Anyone could set himself up as a general practitioner and there was no control whatever over medical practice'.¹⁰² It seems a little bit odd that he worked among Quakers only. In those years, 1727-1728, Morgan entered into a polemic about the theology of the Quaker Robert Barclay with the deist and prolific author Thomas Chubb, living in Salisbury in southern Wiltshire, but there is no indication that they ever met each other.¹⁰³ Morgan may have met Quakers in Marlborough, who certified their Meeting House in High Street in Marlborough in 1727. A Quaker meeting already existed in Marlborough from the 17th century.¹⁰⁴ For a long time, it was also claimed that Morgan became a Quaker, a label, which has been used until our time.¹⁰⁵ But Morgan was not a Quaker himself.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Th. Morgan, *A farther vindication of Mr. Barclay's scheme, in reply to Mr. Chubb's remarks*, London, 1727, 36: dated 'Bristol, September 16, 1727'.

¹⁰⁰ P.T. Marcy, 'Eighteenth century views of Bristol and Bristolians', in: P. McGrath, ed., *Bristol in the eighteenth century*, Newton Abbot, 1972, 11-40 (17); W. Minchinton, 'The port of Bristol in the eighteenth century', in: McGrath, ed., *Bristol*, 127-160 (128); C.M. MacInnes, 'Bristol and the slave trade', in: McGrath, ed., *Bristol*, 161-184.

¹⁰¹ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 271.

¹⁰² M.E. Fissell, *Patients, power and the poor in eighteenth-century Bristol*, reprint, Cambridge, 2002, 204; J.D. Comrie, 'English medicine in the eighteenth century', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 28 (1935) 1603-1610 (1605).

¹⁰³ See Chapter 2 § 12 below.

¹⁰⁴ K. S. Taylor, 'Chalk, cheese, and cloth: the settling of Quaker communities in seventeenth-century Wiltshire', *Quaker Studies*, 10 (2006) 160-84 (177).

¹⁰⁵ So for example W.G. Kümmel, *The New Testament, the history of the investigation of its problems*, 2nd impression, London, 1978, 56; see for his relationship with the Quakers: J. van den Berg, 'Was the Deist Thomas Morgan (d.1743) a medical practitioner among the Quakers in Bristol? Some observations about the history of a Quaker label', *Quaker History*, 100 number 2 (2011) 36-41.

¹⁰⁶ J. Smith, *Bibliotheca anti-Quakeriana; or a catalogue of books adverse to the society of friends, alphabetically arranged*, reprint of the London 1873 edition, New York, 1968, 112; see Chapter 2 § 12 below.

We do not know how long he stayed in Bristol, but he stayed there at least until July 1730, as appears from the second edition of the *Philosophical principles of medicine*, dated Bristol, July 25th 1730. After that date, there is a five-year period about which we are unhappily ignorant about his doings and his whereabouts. Some scholars have suggested that Thomas Morgan was the translator of *A philosophical dissertation upon death*, written by the Piedmontese nobleman Alberto Radicati di Passerano, published in October 1732. But that is the result of a confusion with another person of the name Morgan.¹⁰⁷ The biographer of David Hume noted the suggestion that Hume during his stay in Bristol in 1734 became acquainted with Morgan, but there is doubt about this information.¹⁰⁸ In the article about the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay in the 1735 edition of the translation of Pierre Bayle's *General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*, Thomas Morgan was still called a physician of Bristol.¹⁰⁹ Morgan kept studying medicine during these years as is clear from his publications. In 1735 he published *The mechanical practice of physick*, dated Saddler's Hall, March 5th 1734-5, which he dedicated to Richard Mead, physician to King George II.

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§17: Last years in London

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Apparently, Morgan was living in London at least from the beginning of 1735. Saddler's Hall was on the Northern part of Cheapside, between Foster Lane and Gutter Lane.¹¹⁰ Cheapside, in the heart of the old city, where he lived, was a marketplace and a very busy street. The poet John Gay sang in 1716 of the broad pavement of Cheapside:

Who would of *Watling-street* the dangers share,
When the broad pavement of *Cheap-side* is near?

Charles Dickens jr. wrote in 1879: 'Cheapside remains now what it was five centuries ago, the greatest thoroughfare in the city of London'. It was also the place in history of bloody violence and many riots.¹¹¹ When Thomas Morgan came to live in London, he encountered a

¹⁰⁷ Young, *Dictionary*, 642; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 69, 340 n.50; Mossner, *The encyclopedia*, 394, suggested even that Morgan was the author of the *philosophical dissertation*; see J. van den Berg, 'Thomas Morgan and Alberto Radicati di Passerano, a non-existing relationship', *Notes and Queries*, 55 (2008) 326-328.

¹⁰⁸ E.C. Mossner, *The life of David Hume*, Edinburgh, 1954, 89: 'Many years later Dr. Josiah Tucker, then Dean of Gloucester and rector of St Stephen's in Bristol, told Lord Hailes that Hume, while at Bristol, had become acquainted with Thomas Morgan, the Whiggish and deistical writer; but his lordship, for some reason, remained dubious'.

¹⁰⁹ P. Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical, ... a new and accurate translation*, Volume 2, London, 1735, 654-661 (661).

¹¹⁰ H.B. Wheatly, *London past and present. A dictionary of its history, associations, and traditions*, Volume 3, reprint of the London 1891 edition, Detroit, 1968, 197; Saddler's Hall was destroyed by fire in 1821.

¹¹¹ See about its meaning in early modern London V. Harding, 'Cheapside: commerce and commemoration,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (2008) 77-96; C. Brant and S.E. Whyman, eds., *Walking the streets of eighteenth-century London: John Gay's Trivia (1716)*, Oxford, 2007, 184; Ch. Dickens jr., *Dickens's dictionary of London, an unconventional handbook*, London, 1879, sub voce Cheapside; D. Piper, *The companion guide to London*, 5th edition, London, 1974, 357.

busy metropolis of more than half a million inhabitants, one in six Englishmen living there.¹¹² In 1732 London had an enormous quantity of 5099 streets, lanes and squares, and 95969 houses.¹¹³ Sir Robert Walpole was at the height of his power, moving in 1735 to 10 Downing Street, since then the customary residence of the Prime Minister. He lived there till his resignation in February 1742. In the years that Morgan lived in the city, London was in turmoil. The year 1736 was a year of considerable popular disturbance. In the summer there were anti-Irish riots in the city, because of the low wages of the many Irish labourers who came to the city.¹¹⁴ Queen Caroline had died in 1737. In 1738, construction started on the building of Westminster Bridge, the second bridge across the Thames. The winter of 1739-1740 was known for its cold with a great frost on the Thames.¹¹⁵ London was a metropolis with many negative aspects: drunkenness, violence and disorder. Drunkenness was widespread. The sale of spirits rose high in the days that Morgan lived in the city. We may recall a famous dictum of Trevelyan: 'Drunkenness was the acknowledged national vice of Englishmen of all classes'. Both men and women participated in the drinking. There were more than seven thousand establishments in which distilled spirits were sold. In 1736, the Gin Act was passed, but many riots in the city followed in the next year, which led to the unmaking of the Act.¹¹⁶ Crime was everywhere. No-one was safe in the city. It was a place full of beggars. At the end of the century, Matthew Martin estimated there were more than fifteen thousand beggars in the streets of London, mostly women and children. It was also a place full of prostitution. The philanthropist Jonas Hanway, founder of the Magdalene Hospital, noted in 1760 that there were more than 3000 common prostitutes in the two cities of London and Westminster.¹¹⁷ There were some five functioning general hospitals. Lunatics were everywhere on the streets, but also in quarantine. Squalid slums brought infectious diseases. Infant mortality was high, three in four children died before their fifth birthday. Around 1730, the death-rate had exceeded the birth-rate. The state of health of many was

¹¹² R. Gray, *A history of London*, London, 1978, 201.

¹¹³ F. Braudel, *Civilization and capitalism, 15th - 18th century: the structure of every day life*, reprint Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992, 548.

¹¹⁴ G. Rudé, 'The London "mob" of the eighteenth century', *The Historical Journal*, 2 (1959) 1-18 (1); Stevenson, *Popular disturbances*, 61.

¹¹⁵ J. Richardson, *The annals of London. A year-by-year record of a thousand years of history*, London, 2000, 192-4.

¹¹⁶ R.B. Shoemaker, *The London mob: violence and disorder in eighteenth century England*, London, 2004, 7; G.F.E. Rudé, *Hanoverian London 1714-1808*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971, 91; Trevelyan, *English social history*, 329; J. Warner and F.J. Ivis, 'Gin and gender in early eighteenth-century London', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 24 (2000) 85-105; J. Warner and F.J. Ivis, 'Informers and their social networks in eighteenth-century London', *Social Science History*, 25 (2001) 563-87 (565); P. Clark, ' "The mother gin" controversy in the early eighteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 38 (1988) 63-84 (68); Stevenson, *Popular disturbances*, 60-1; G. Rudé, 'Mother Gin and the London riots of 1736', in: G. Rudé, *Paris and London in the eighteenth century*, London, 1970, 201-21; J. Warner and F.J. Ivis, ' "Damn you, you informing bitch", vox populi and the unmaking of the gin act of 1736', *Journal of Social History*, 33 (1999) 299-330.

¹¹⁷ P. Linebaugh, *The London hanged. Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century*, London, 2003; T. Hitchcock, 'Begging on the streets of eighteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005) 478-98 (481); R. Trumbach, *Sex and the gender revolution*, volume 1: *Heterosexuality and the third gender in Enlightenment London*, Chicago, 1998, 112.

abominable.¹¹⁸ It was not a nice city for the poor. The question has been asked: 'Eighteenth-century London, urban paradise or fallen city?'¹¹⁹ In any case, it was no paradise. Social contacts could be encountered on the streets and everywhere. Already in the time of Queen Anne there were nearly 450 coffee houses and in 1739 this figure rose to 551 and it was stated: 'Coffee-houses were one of the most characteristic social institutions of eighteenth-century London'.¹²⁰ They were the place to be, to read and to discuss the topics of the day. Morgan had many social contacts. The novelist Thomas Amory called him in 1755 'my friend, the late excellent Dr. Morgan'.¹²¹ He was in contact with orthodox theologians such as the well-known apologist and Non-conformist divine Nathaniel Lardner. He was interested in the topic of early Christianity as is demonstrated by their correspondence in May-June 1735 about St Luke's Gospel.¹²² In the year 1737, William Warburton, another famous apologist, but at the time living at Brant Broughton near Newark in Nottinghamshire, met Morgan in London, as stated in a letter to the clergyman and historian Thomas Birch on August 17th 1737: 'I have some knowledge of the author (=Morgan). An afternoon's conversation when I was last in town, gave me the top and bottom of him ... I parted from him with the most contemptible opinion both of his candour and his sense'.¹²³ The dislike appeared to be mutual, as we will see.

We have evidence that Morgan practiced as a medical practitioner in London.¹²⁴ The German preacher and traveller Georg Wilhelm Alberti, writing letters about the religious situation in Britain, wrote in 1752 – nine years after Morgan's death - denigrating words, implicating his bad performance as a practitioner, and therefore looking for the company of the deists.¹²⁵ But

¹¹⁸ S.C. Lawrence, *Charitable knowledge. Hospital pupils and practitioners in eighteenth-century London*, Cambridge, 1996, 39; J. Andrews and A. Scull, *Customers and patrons of the mad-trade The management of lunacy in eighteenth century London*, Berkeley, 2003; Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 5-6; Trevelyan, *English social history*, 356; R. Porter, 'Cleaning up the great wen: public health in eighteenth-century London', *Medical History Supplements*, 11 (1991) 61-75.

¹¹⁹ A.J. Weitzmann, 'Eighteenth-century London, urban paradise or fallen city?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975) 469-80.

¹²⁰ Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 77; M. Ellis, 'Coffee-house libraries in mid-eighteenth-century London', *The Library*, 10 (2009) 3-40 (3).

¹²¹ (Amory), *Memoirs*, 513.

¹²² Published in *Memoirs of the life and writings of the late reverend Nathaniel Lardner, D.D.*, London, 1769, 57-65; and also by A. Kippis, *The life of Dr. Nathaniel Lardner*, Volume 1, s.l.s.a (=1788), 132-39. Morgan's name appears in the list of subscribers of a book by the Presbyterian George Benson, *The history of the first planting the Christian religion*, Volume 1, London, 1735, v.

¹²³ J. Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century consisting of authentic memoirs and original letters of eminent persons*, volume 2, London, 1817, 70; see for the relation between Warburton and Morgan, J. van den Berg, 'Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton: a conflict the other way round', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991) 82-85.

¹²⁴ S. Merriman, 'Anecdotes of Daniel Turner, M.D.', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (1845) 145-7 (147).

¹²⁵ G.W. Alberti, *Briefe betreffend den allerneuesten Zustand der Religion und der Wissenschaften in Gross-Britannien*, volume 2, Hanover, 1752, 421-22: 'Thomas Morgan konnte mit seiner wenigen Arzeneywissenschaft nicht viel verdienen, begab sich daher in die Gesellschaft der Deisten und schrieb gegen die Religion'.

Morgan had more enemies at home, such as the poet and clergyman Thomas Newcomb, Chaplain to the Dukes of Richmond, who sometime between 1737 and 1740 wrote this nice satirical poem about the author of *The moral philosopher*:

From other quacks if you receive a pill,
It's kind, and does but half the patient kill;
M-rg-n's prescriptions have much more to do,
Which murder both the soul and body too.
Whate'er he dictates, works by mystic ways,
Like maggots, first corrupts, and then destroys;
It cuts down all it meets, both branch and root,
The sick and sound, and kills and damns to-boot.
If then you prize salvation, shun his quill,
Or if you value life, avoid his pill;
Whose diff'rent ways in various pow'rs excel,
These send you to the grave, and those to hell.
How sure is death where he his art employs,
Since those his physic spares, his pen destroys?
Satan must weep to view his triumphs end,
When *M-rg-n* dies, his best and surest friend;
Who chuses in dull blasphemy to deal,
Rather than starve each day, and want a meal.¹²⁶

Another enemy was his medical colleague Daniel Turner.¹²⁷ He described Morgan as 'a blustering gentleman' and 'this teaching philomath', who came to the city with 'new phrases minted in a country town, and brought lately to us in London'.¹²⁸ Turner's anecdotes describe a consultation in London in which he and Morgan disagreed about the application of medicines.

But it seems that most of Morgan's time was devoted to the composition of *The moral philosopher*, the work that would make him famous. *The moral philosopher* was published anonymously and printed for the author in London in February 1737. Morgan, who had written his first pamphlets as a Protestant dissenter, but later under his own name, probably did not think it wise to publish this book under his name. In Britain, his authorship was only publicly known in 1741, after the publication of the apology of the Non-conformist minister at the Old Jewry, Samuel Chandler, son of the already named Henry Chandler.¹²⁹ As to the reception of *The moral philosopher*, in total more than twenty-five books and pamphlets written against it in the English language are known.¹³⁰ Morgan himself answered the critics

¹²⁶ Th. Newcomb, *A miscellaneous collection of original poems*, London, 1740, 280-1; cf also (Th. Newcomb), *A supplement to one thousand seventeen hundred thirty-eight: not written by mr. Pope*, London, 1738, 7: 'quacks flourish – R-ck and M-rg-n kill', references to Richard Rock and Thomas Morgan.

¹²⁷ On Turner see Ph.K. Wilson, *Surgery, skin, and syphilis, Daniel Turner's London 1667-1741*, (Clio Medica 54), Amsterdam, 1999.

¹²⁸ Quoted by Merriman, 'Anecdotes', 147.

¹²⁹ S. Chandler, *A vindication of the history of the Old Testament, in answer to the misrepresentations and calumnies of T. Morgan, M.D., and Moral Philosopher*, London, 1741.

¹³⁰ N.N, *British Museum: General Catalogue of Printed Books*, Volume 164, London, 1963, 376-78.

John Leland and John Chapman in Volume 2 of *The moral philosopher*, and again John Leland as well as Moses Lowman in Volume 3 of *The moral philosopher*.¹³¹ Furthermore, he answered the Presbyterian critic Joseph Hallett already in July 1737. In 1741, he wrote a reaction to Samuel Chandler.¹³² In his last years, he published his works with the printer Thomas Cox at The Lamb under the Royal Exchange.

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§18: His death

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From at least 1740, Morgan lived in Union-Court, Broad Street.¹³³ Morgan died in Broad Street on January 14th 1743, according to *The Gentleman's Magazine* with 'a true Christian resignation'.¹³⁴ We do know his age at the time of his death: 71 years. Probably he died a poor man, because he left a widow in narrow circumstances.¹³⁵ His death was announced even in the *Bibliothèque Britannique* and in *The Scots Magazine*.¹³⁶ Warburton wrote ironically to Birch on January 18th 1743: 'I live in peace, now the redoubtable dr. Morgan is dead'.¹³⁷ After his death, there was much gossip about his life. Alberti – who was no friend of Morgan – wrote that he heard talk from former neighbours in Cheapside of Morgan's reckless and scandalous life.¹³⁸ The great-grandson of grocer Nathaniel Merriman, the obstetrician Samuel Merriman, referred in 1832 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* to the close of Morgan's life: 'indulgence in drink became his great failing ... he shortened his life by intemperance'.¹³⁹ Was it true? The two sources are independent of each other and the family tradition may be right. We may illustrate this rumour with an illustration from *The moral philosopher*. On a certain point Philalethes asks 'Pray, hand me a large glass of wine, with a little water in it'. Theophanes answers: 'You drink as if you were converting yourself. Will you have another glass?'.¹⁴⁰

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¹³¹ See Chapter 5.

¹³² (Th. Morgan), *A defence of the moral Philosopher; against a pamphlet, intituled, "The immorality of the Moral Philosopher"*, 1737; Th. Morgan, *A vindication of the Moral Philosopher; against the false accusations, assaults, and personal abuses, of S. Chandler*, London, 1741.

¹³³ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, vii: dated 'Union Court, Broad Street, March 18, 1740'; Morgan, *A vindication of the Moral Philosopher*, 70: dated 'Union-Court, Broad Street, May 25, 1741'.

¹³⁴ N.N., 'A list of deaths for the year 1743', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 13 (1743) 51.

¹³⁵ Merriman, (Memoir), 11.

¹³⁶ *Bibliothèque Britannique, ou histoire des ouvrages des savans de la Grande-Bretagne*, 20/2 (1743) 233: 'Le fameux dr. Morgan ... mourut ici le 14. de Janvier dernier. On lui a l'obligation d'avoir donné lieu à de bons ouvrages par un mauvais livre: qu'il lui plut d'intutiler: *The Moral Philosopher*'; *The Scots Magazine*, 5 (1743) 50.

¹³⁷ Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 129.

¹³⁸ Alberti, *Briefe*, volume 2, 449: 'ein ruchloses, liederliches und ärgerliches Leben'; nearly the same opinion in J.C.C. Löwe, *Dogmatische und moralische Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten mit den Deisten*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1752, 91.

¹³⁹ Merriman, (Memoir), 11.

¹⁴⁰ (Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, 138.

§19: Summary

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Thomas Morgan lived from 1671/72 till 1743. About the first period of his life little is known. Looking for archival sources about Morgan in British national, county, and local archives has not yielded many results. Genealogical sources with respect to his family are meagre.

Summing up, we see that there is a clear development in his life from a poor lad in a farmer's house near Bridgwater to a student at the local dissenting academy, from Independent preacher in Bruton to Presbyterian minister in Marlborough, and from medical practitioner in Bristol to deist in London.

Morgan's output numbers more than 3500 printed pages in pamphlets and books in the areas of theological disputes, medicine and Deism. As far as we know from the sources, he starts out with a classical orthodox confession of faith during his Presbyterian ordination, after which he rapidly joins the Arian front during his stay in Marlborough, actively participating in the pamphlet war around Salters' Hall on the Non-subscriber's side. In this period, Morgan still appears firmly to adhere to the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Confessional particularities, however, begin to lose ground. Reason is becoming for him an important element in every discussion. He is - in his own words - 'at the same time defending both Scripture and Reason'.¹⁴¹ In those years, he is certainly not a deist, and firmly denies being one. His preferred battlefield at that time is the conflict on Arianism and the struggle against Enthusiasm. In the meantime, he studies medicine, gaining a doctorate in medicine at Glasgow University in 1724. After the break with the dissenting community of Marlborough he seems a bit lost. With the financial support of his father in law he turns fully to medicine, following the theories of Newton. From 1725, he is an active medical writer, practicing in Bristol from 1727 onwards. In 1735, he shows up in London, practicing medicine. Then, in 1737, he publishes his most important book: *The moral philosopher*. The break with the opinions of his youth is enormous. Scripture itself, and especially the Old Testament, is the aim of his fierce criticism. He now calls himself a "Christian Deist". *The moral philosopher* provokes more than twenty-five published reactions, mostly negative, both about its content and its style. Morgan takes up his pen to write a rebuttal against five antagonists: Chandler, Chapman, Hallett, Leland and Lowman. He was not a man who sought peace in the church, but was always active on the religious battle-ground. He develops a style of writing, which is sometimes very cynical. He seeks recognition among the dissenters, but he only receives it for his medical works. No evidence that Morgan had any links with freemasonry, which flourished in Britain in the years 1720-1740, can be found.¹⁴²

After his death, there was much gossip about his life and morals. He was listed among the freethinkers and canonized as a deist. He is called a modern Marcion, a pioneer of Biblical criticism, and a forerunner of the Tübingen School. His books can be found in many libraries and booksellers' catalogues in the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. In Unitarian circles, he received some interest. Manchester College in York noted various loans by Unitarian students of works by Morgan in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁴³ Morgan seems to be forgotten in the second half of the 18th century and ever since. In the study of Deism, he hardly receives any attention. For many scholars he belonged to the less prominent deists and was the least known of them all.

¹⁴¹ Th. Morgan, *A defence of natural and revealed religion*, London, 1728, 21.

¹⁴² Cf. R. Berman, *The foundations of modern freemasonry*, Eastbourne, 2012.

¹⁴³ See Appendix § 4.