

ANTIQUARY

T. & J. Swords.

Part Two. The 1799 Associate Reformed Standards and Samuel Miller's *Brief Retrospect*.

As previously detailed, at the end of the 18th century, New York, along with the rest of the fledgling United States, wanted for a "cultivated social group to occupy the responsible positions in government, to form the taste in letters and the other arts, to fill the ranks of the professions and to carry into higher spheres the education of the youth."¹ This lack was keenly felt and this period saw much activity directed toward a remedy. Americans would gather formally and informally to 'improve themselves,' to read, discuss and debate; they formed libraries and societies; and they sought to improve the institutions of learning. T. & J. Swords participated in this general current of activity and came to be one of the most prominent New York publishers of the Federal Period. They served the publishing needs of scientists and physicians such as Samuel Latham Mitchill, Elihu Hubbard Smith and Edward Miller in the founding of the nation's first medical journal; of budding novelists and dramatists such as Charles Brockden Brown, Smith and William Dunlap; as well as of learned Presbyterian ministers like Samuel Miller—all of whom were members of

1. Robert Courtney Hall, *A Scientist in the Early Republic, Samuel Latham Mitchill 1764–1831* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934) [6]–7.

2. Charles E. Butler, "T & J Swords, Publishers," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 58 (1954) 90–91.

3. "I stopped in at the Swords Booksellers the Episcopal headquarters to hear the result of the Oratorio." "As I was returning home yesterday at 12, I stopped at the Swords' our Epis^l head quarters" *Letters from John Pintard to his Daughter* (New York: Printed for the New York Historical Society, 1940–41) 2.334; 4.87. Pintard mentions the Swords Bookstore frequently, where he would often go to try to find a publication, get a book bound, or submit an article for *The Churchman*, the 'Episcopal paper' (1.223, 310, 351–352; 2.334, 4.58–59, 85, 128).

4. *The Constitution and Standards of the Associate-Reformed Church in North America* (New York: T & J Swords, 1799). Evans 35119.

5. B. B. Warfield, "Notes Toward A Bibliography of the Westminster Confession: II. America," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, xiii (1902) 116–117. "The present is the *editio princeps* of the Associate Reformed series. It is a large and handsomely printed volume."

6. See Chris Coldwell, "Examining the Work of S. W. Carruthers," *The Confessional Presbyterian*, volume 1 (2005) 52.

or adherents to that famous discussion and writing society, the New York Friendly Club. The Swords' store served as a rendezvous point for these men and others of their professions, and it is easy to imagine that they viewed them, in the words of Dr. Smith, as "our printers."

The Swords, it was noted, were dedicated Episcopalians, and their firm served informally as the publishing house of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York and functioned as a general meeting place for "all the Episcopal clergy, resident or visiting New York..."² John Pintard was a prominent merchant in the city, Clerk to the Corporation of New York, City Inspector from 1805 to 1809, an Episcopalian, and a friend of the Swords. He mentions them in letters to his daughter a number of times, often referring to the Swords' place as "our Episcopal Headquarters."³

However, despite this fact, at least for the first 20 years from their founding in 1786, this relationship did not prevent them from publishing the occasional title from the prominent Reformed and Presbyterian ministers in the city. These publications were listed in Appendix J of part one of this article. Two deserve some further notice for their size and importance, namely the 1799 edition of the ARP Standards, and Miller's *Brief Retrospect*. They no doubt allowed the Swords to display both their talent and, in one instance, their interest along with the other literati of the day in increasing the literary stature of the United States of America.

The 1799 ARP Standards

Given the amount of work the Swords performed for the ARP and Dr. John Mitchell Mason, it is perhaps not surprising, that the most significant of their Presbyterian oriented productions was the first edition of the *Standards of the Associate Reformed Church*,⁴ which is the *editio princeps* of all the subsequent editions.⁵ Prior to 1799, the Swords had published minute extracts of the Associate synod for 1797 and 1798, as well as *A Draught of an Overture for the Government, Worship, & Discipline* in 1796. In 1798 the Swords also published Dr. Mason's first work, *Letters on Frequent Communion*. Presumably Mason would have been involved in the production of the ARP standards, though at this writing the author has found no documentation for this.

The production is probably one of, if not the most impressively printed of all the American editions of the Confession and Catechisms. It is true, it does not have the scripture proofs in the more pleasing double column format, a form that became prominent in the 18th century Scottish editions beginning with Dunlop's of 1719;⁶ nevertheless, it is a fine piece of work. Warfield calls it a "large and handsomely printed volume." Each part has a separate title page dated 1799, but the work is continuously paginated. Most of the distinct sections have a different decorative tailpiece at the end.

All paper produced for printing was still hand-made at this time. The Swords used both “wove” paper, first used in America in 1795, as well as paper made by the earlier process which leaves the easily recognizable “chain lines” most identify with handmade paper. The paper used in the printing of the ARP Standards has chain lines running north and south at 1 1/8 inch intervals. There is no discernable water mark in the author’s copy.⁷ The Swords may have purchased from New York papermakers, but a wove paper used in the Swords printing of Samuel Miller’s 1798 fast sermon has the water mark “B 1795.”⁸ While this writer’s eyes are untrained to judge watermarks, the “B” in this mark appears to be similar to a “B” watermark for a paper sample found in Newport, Delaware.⁹

Examples of the ARP Standards, which one would expect to be of great interest to those interested in that denomination’s history, can be purchased at fairly reasonable rates, depending upon condition and other factors.¹⁰ Warfield’s description is as follows:¹¹

... 8vo, pp. 614, 6¾ x 3½ inches (block of type); proof-texts at large; on back of p. 613 (unnumbered p. 614) is printed a list of *errata*. The volume contains the Act of the Synod of Greencaſtle, May 31, 1799, with reference to the Standards of the Church; the Confession of Faith (pp. 9–174); the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; the Government, Discipline, Directories for Public and Private worship; together with Appendices, giving Forms of Eccleſiaſtical Papers, Rules of Procedure in Judicatories, Solemnization of Marriage, Burial of the Dead; and also the Sum of Saving Knowledge and the Practical Use thereof. There is a ſeparate title to the Confession: . . .

The Synod of the Associate Reformed Church was formally organized out of the Presbyteries of the Associate and of the Reformed Churches, October 31, 1782. This Synod declared the Doctrinal Standards of the new Church to be the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, but added: “This declaration, however, does not extend to the following ſections of the Confession of Faith, which define the power of civil government in relation to religion: chap. xx, ſec. 4; chap. xxiii, ſec. 3; chap. xxxi, ſec. 2. Theſe ſections are reſerved for a candid diſcuſſion on ſome future occaſion as God ſhall be pleaſed to direct” (See Scouller, *History of the United Presbyterian Church of North America*, chap. v: in *The American Church History Series*, vol. xi. p. 185 [Christian Literature Company, New York: 1894].) This candid diſcuſſion continued ſixteen years, the Synod living meanwhile under this “Declaratory Act.” At the Synod’s meeting at Greencaſtle, Pa., May, 1799, the ſections excepted

to were modified, and a modification made in Q. 109 of the Larger Catechiſm; and theſe documents thus modified were ſet forth as the doctrinal Standards of the Church: or in the ſtatement of the Synod itſelf, it “judicially ratified *the Weſtminſter Confession of Faith*, and *Catechiſms, Larger and Shorter*, with a modification of the doctrine concerning the power of the civil magiſtrate in matters of religion,” together with “the Overture for the *Government and Discipline* of the Church, and the *Directory for Worſhip, Public and Private*,” and declared them to be “The Conſtitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church,” etc. (Preface to the preſent edition; Scouller, as cited, p. 192). The alteration made in Q. 109 of the Larger Catechiſm conſiſted merely in ſubſtituting the word “authorizing” for “tolerating.” Thoſe in the Confession of Faith were more extenſive and remodel the ſections involved. Some ſlight changes were introduced alſo into the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, as published at the end of this volume: this document was not treated, however, as a part of the Standards of the Church.

The preſent is the *editio princeps* of the Associate Reformed ſeries. It is a large and handsomely printed volume. There are copies of it in the libraries of the Presbyterian Hiſtorical Society of Philadelphia, and of the Rev. Dr. E. R. Craven, of Philadelphia.

The Presbyterian Hiſtorical Society ſtill liſts a copy in their holdings,¹² but it is uncertain at this writing what became of the library of PCUSA miniſter Elijah Richardson Craven (1824–1904), who died juſt a few years after the date of

7. Correſpondence, Clark Evans, Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress, to Chris Coldwell, December 5, 2006. Mr. Evans examined the Library’s examples of both the ARP Standards and Miller’s *Brief Retrospect*, and he did not find watermarks in either.

8. Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New Caſtle, Del.: Oak Knoll Preſs, 1995) 119. Woven paper was firſt used in books in 1795; English papers for this period from 1795 to 1800 are uſually marked ſimply with a “1794.”

9. Thomas L. Gravell, George Miller, and Elizabeth Waſh, *American Watermarks 1690–1835* (New Caſtle, Del.: Oak Knoll Preſs, 2002) 22. Gravell only notes where the paper was used, ſo it could have been made in Delaware, New York, or poſſibly ſomewhere elſe.

10. The author purchased a copy with the front board detached in Auſt 2002 for \$125.00.

11. The titles given by Warfield for the Standards and for the title page for the Confession are not entirely accurate as to the faces and the use of capital and lower caſe, ſo theſe have not been included (at the ellipſes). Rather than noting the omiſſions and miſtakes, new renderings are included in a fuller collation of the volume below.

12. *The Conſtitution and Standards of the Associate-Reformed*

Warfield's article. By one account, there are nearly 40 libraries worldwide that own at least one example of this work.¹³

Warfield's titling is not very exact. The title page lettering is mostly all capitals of varying point sizes. Also, Warfield was primarily concerned with the Confession of Faith. A more detailed collation of the volume is as follows:

Endsheet

Blank

[1], **Half-Title Page:** THE | CONSTITUTION | AND | STANDARDS | OF THE | ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH | IN | NORTH-AMERICA. The verso is blank.

[3], **Title-Page,** THE | CONSTITUTION | AND | STANDARDS | OF THE | ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH | IN | NORTH-AMERICA. | ===== | NEW YORK; | Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street. | ♦ | 1799. The verso (page [4]) is blank.

[5]–6, ===== | *Associate-Reformed Synod at GREENCASTLE,* | May 31, 1799. There is a small tailpiece at the bottom of page 6.

[7], **General Contents.** | ♦ | *The Confession of Faith.* | *The Larger Catechism.* | *The Shorter Catechism.* | *The Government of the Church.* | *The Discipline of the Church.* | *Directory for Public Worship.* | *Directory for Private Worship.* | *Appendix I. Forms of Ecclesiastical Papers.* | II. *Rules of Procedure in Judicatories.* | III. *Solemnization of Marriage.*

Church in North-America. New York: Printed by T. & J. Swords, 1799. AMER. BX 8999 .A7 A2 1799

13. *The Constitution and Standards of the Associate-Reformed Church in North-America.* New-York: Printed by T. & J. Swords, 1799. OCLC # 2583281. 1. Allegheny College; 2. American University; 3. Arkansas State; 4. British Library; 5. Calvin College and Theological Seminary; 6. Cornell University; 7. Duke University Library; 8. Fordham University; 9. General Theological Seminary; 10. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; 11. Graduate Theological Union Library; 12. Lancaster Theological Seminary; 13. Library of Congress; 14. Lutheran Theological Seminary; 15. Michigan State University; 16. Muskingum College Library; 17. National Library of Scotland; 18. New York Public Library; 19. New York State Library; 20. Newbury Library; 21. Oberlin College Library; 22. Princeton Theological Seminary (2 copies); 23. Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary; 24. Rutgers University; 25. Southern Methodist University; 26. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; 27. Texas Tech University; 28. Union PSCE; 29. University of Iowa; 30. University of Massachusetts Amherst; 31. University of Missouri, Columbia; 32. University of Virginia; 33. Virginia Tech; 34. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; 35. Wesleyan University; 36. Western Theological Seminary; 37. Westminster Theological Seminary (2 copies); 38. Wisconsin Historical Society; 39. Yale University.

| IV. *Burial of the Dead.* | *The SUM of Saving Knowledge.* | *The PRACTICAL USE of Saving Knowledge.*

[8], *Associate-Reformed Synod at Greencastle,* | May 31, 1799. This only regards the Confession of Faith.

[9], **Title Page,** THE | CONFESION OF FAITH, | AGREED UPON BY THE | ASSEMBLY OF DIVINES AT WESTMINSTER, | WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF | COMMISSIONERS | FROM THE | CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, | AS RECEIVED BY THE | ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH | IN | NORTH AMERICA. | WITH THE | PROOFS FROM THE SCRIPTURE. | ===== | NEW YORK: | Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street. | ♦ | 1799.

[10], **CONTENTS.** | ♦ | This is the traditional listing of the 33 chapters of the Confession of Faith, except the word "the" is missing from the title of chapter 18, "Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation," and from chapter 26, "Of the Communion of Saints." This is repeated at the chapter headings.

[11]–174, ===== | THE | CONFESION OF FAITH. | ===== A large tailpiece occurs on page 174.

[175] **Title Page,** THE | LARGER CATECHISM, | AGREED UPON BY THE | ASSEMBLY OF DIVINES AT WESTMINSTER, | WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF | COMMISSIONERS | FROM THE | CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, | AS RECEIVED BY THE | ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH | IN | NORTH-AMERICA. | WITH THE | PROOFS FROM THE SCRIPTURE. | ===== | NEW-YORK: | Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street. | ♦ | 1799.

[176]–418, ===== | THE | LARGER CATECHISM. | ===== A large tailpiece occurs on page 418.

[419], **Title Page,** THE | SHORTER CATECHISM, | AGREED UPON BY THE | ASSEMBLY OF DIVINES AT WESTMINSTER, | WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF | COMMISSIONERS | FROM THE | CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, | AS RECEIVED BY THE | ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH | IN | NORTH-AMERICA. | WITH THE | PROOFS FROM THE SCRIPTURE. | ===== | NEW-YORK: | Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street. | ♦ | 1799.

[421]–469, ===== | THE | SHORTER CATECHISM. | ===== One of the larger tailpieces occurs at the bottom of page 469. For some reason the ARP dropped the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer and the Creed, as well as the Assembly's note regarding the Catechisms and their qualifications regarding the Creed. These appear at the end of the

Shorter Catechism in the original text and in the traditional Scottish editions.

[471] Title Page, THE | GOVERNMENT, | DISCIPLINE, | WORSHIP, | OF THE | ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH | IN | NORTH-AMERICA. | ===== | NEW-YORK: | Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street. | ♦ | 1799.

[472] ASSOCIATE-REFORMED SYNOD AT GREENCASTLE, | May 31, 1799. | ACT, | *Approving an Overture concerning the Government, Discipline, and Worship of the Church.*

[473]–509, | ===== | THE | GOVERNMENT, &c. | ===== | BOOK I. | *Of the Government of the Church.*

(510)–533, BOOK II. | *Of Discipline.* A small tailpiece occurs on page 533.

(534)–571, BOOK III. | *Of Worship.* A large tailpiece of what look to be a collection of crossed farming tools with a hat in the center occurs on page 571 at the end of CHAP. VII, DIRECTORY for SECRET and PRIVATE WORSHIP. Page 572 is blank.

[573]–581, ===== | APPENDIX I. | ===== This appendix contains various forms numbered No. I through No. XXII.

[582]–583, ===== | APPENDIX II. | ===== | *Of Proceedings in Judicatories, and the Behaviour of Members.* A small tailpiece is placed at the end of page 583.

[584]–585, ===== | APPENDIX III. | ===== | *Of the Solemnization of Marriage.*

[586], ===== | APPENDIX IV. | ===== | *Concerning Burial of the Dead.* A large tailpiece occurs at the bottom of the page.

[587], THE | S U M | OF | SAVING KNOWLEDGE; | OR | A BRIEF SUM | OF | CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, | CONTAINED IN THE | HOLY SCRIPTURES, | And held forth in the foregoing | CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS, | TOGETHER WITH THE | PRACTICAL USE THEREOF. | ♦ | JOHN vi. 37. All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me: | and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. | ===== | NEW-YORK: | Printed by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-street. | 1799.

[588], ADVERTISEMENT. | THE *Sum of Saving Knowledge, and the Practical Use of Saving Knowledge,* are subjoined by order of Synod, not as a part of the public standards of the

church, but as a comprehensive summary of divine truth which GOD hath blessed, which is savoury to his people; and which numbers of them wish to have bound up in the same volume with the Confession and Catechisms it is designed to epitomize. At the same time the Synod judged it necessary to model some expressions in such a manner as to avoid the improper distinction between the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace, which, in reality, are not two, but one and the same blessed covenant, viewed under different aspects; and to conform the phraseology to the doctrine of the Confession and Catechisms.* One or two explanatory notes have also been added. | * Con. Chap. vii. Larg. Cat. Q. 31. Short. Cat. Q. 20. While a full comparison of the text with the original was not undertaken, it appears at the least that every occurrence of the phrase “covenant of redemption” was changed to “covenant of grace.” The notes all occur in the Practical Use, and are as follows: 1. Under the second warrant, doctrine eight, the word Preventeth is defined: “Preventeth, i. e. is before-hand with us.” 2. Under the third warrant to believe, point 2, the phrase “he must consider that this is a command of the gospel” has the note: “i.e. A command founded on the dispensation of grace revealed in the gospel, and which could not be enjoined by the law as a covenant of works, which knows nothing of a Mediator; otherwise all commands do, in their own nature, belong to the law.” 3. Under the fourth warrant to believe, point 3, the term “infirmit” is defined in a note: “A term borrowed from the Scots law, signifying the solemnity of the delivery of an heritable subject to the proprietor.” The Sum was dropped from the ARP Standards in the 1874 Synod of the South edition and in all subsequent editions.

[589]–612, ===== | THE | SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE, &c. | ===== There is a small tailpiece on page 612.

[613], CONTENTS | OF THE | SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE. | ♦ At the bottom of page 613 is placed THE END.

[614], ERRATA. | Page 449, note x, for “1 Pet. ii. 15.” Read 1 Pet. ii. 17. | 453, last line, for “haughtiness” read *naughtiness.* | 541, line 12, in a part of the copies printed off, “fruitfulness” is inserted instead of *fruitfulness.*

[615], T. & J. SWORDS | Have constantly for sale, at their Book-store and Printing-office, | No. 99 Pearl-street, | A Collection of | B O O K S, | IN | DIVINITY, LAW, PHYSIC, HISTORY, VOYAGES, | TRAVELS, &c. &c. | *With a general Assortment of* | S T A T I O N A R Y. | They execute every kind of | Printing | At the shortest notice. Page 616 is blank.

Endsheet.

Miller's *Brief Retrospect*

As noted in part one, the Presbyterian author most frequently published by the Swords was Dr. Samuel Miller. In addition to six sermons and discourses, the firm published his largest and most critically acclaimed work, *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (1803), in two large volumes totaling 1,054 pages.¹⁴ This work gained the author much praise and no doubt maintained the firm's reputation for publishing high quality scholarly books. As for Miller, "the work certainly had the effect of adding to his reputation in the literary world. Among its more immediate fruits, were his reception from Union College, on the 4th, and the University of Pennsylvania on the 6th of May, 1804, of the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and his unanimous election on the 29th of June follow-

14. *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century...* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1803 [1804]). Shaw & Shoemaker 4654.

15. Samuel Miller (1816–1883), *Life of Samuel Miller, D.D. LL.D.* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Haffelfinger, 1869) 1.178.

16. According to inscriptions in both volumes, the nicer of the two examples was purchased by an A. F. Russel in 1806 from Alexander & Phillips Bookstore in Carlisle, PA. Russel subsequently gave the volumes to the Union Society; presumably, the Union Literary Society of Washington College, as the volumes are *ex libris* with labels from Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, PA.

17. [Paul Johnston,] "T. & J. Swords, Early New York Printers," *The Book Collector's Packet* 1 (1932) 16.

18. For instance, it lacks the multiple tail pieces used throughout that book, having only a simple double rule at the main chapter breaks. In the whole work there are but two illustrations, both of the Quadrant (1.472, 476).

19. A copy of the sermon on suicide signed from "the author" has been offered at just under \$240.00 by Zupal Books of Cleveland, Ohio, and this writer has seen another unsigned example priced at \$250.00. An example of the Washington sermon in good condition at this writing is being offered at \$275.00 (though the author's copy was purchased on Ebay for less than half that amount). One might find a good set of the *Brief Retrospect* for less than these prices. Of the author's two sets, the nicer was purchased in March 1998 for \$169.00, and the other for less than \$40.00 in June 2005. The 2001 reprint by Thoemmes Press has listed for resale for about \$50.00. Some booksellers have placed much higher prices on original sets, as well as on the Thoemmes Press edition.

20. Other works that attempt to analyze Miller's *Brief Retrospect* are: Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York, 1943); Andrew Hook, "Samuel Miller's *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* and its Scottish Context," *From Goosecreek To Ganderclough: Studies in Scottish-American Literary and Cultural History* (East Linton, Scotland, 1999); May, *The Enlightenment in America*; Gilbert Chinard, "Progress and Perfectibility in Samuel Miller's Intellectual History," in George Boas *et al.* (eds.), *Studies in Intellectual History* (Baltimore, 1953); Harold S. Jantz, "The Samuel Miller Papers at Princeton," *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, IV (1943) 68–75.

21. *The Cambridge History of American Literature Vol. 1: 1590–1820*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge University Press, 1997) 565–566.

ing, upon the motion of Dr. Adam Clarke, the commentator, as a corresponding member of the Philological Society of Manchester, England."¹⁵ Regarding the honorary degree, Dr. Sprague remarked that at that time "it was uncommon, if not unprecedented for a person so young to receive that honour ..." (1.179).

The author owns two examples of *Brief Retrospect*.¹⁶ As one would expect from Johnston's remarks cited in part one regarding the Swords' presswork, the volumes do indeed appear to be very nicely executed.

The general belief is that Early American printing, if distinguished by anything at all, is to be discredited with slovenly press work, miserable paper, and bad types.... A few years ago we became interested in the printing of T. & J. Swords, printers and publishers, whose books were attractively done.... But T. & J. Swords, though they depended to a great extent upon religious, college, and state, printing for their bread and butter, were far from inactive in the production of such literary and poetical works as the budding Town had to offer. And it is in these literary works that they have produced their most attractive books.¹⁷

The examples in both cases have aged certainly, and have some weak and split boards, but overall and certainly internally, they have weathered the two centuries very well. It does not appear to be as elaborate a work as the 1799 ARP Standards, but is a fine production nevertheless.¹⁸ While a resurgence of interest and appreciation for Miller's works has increased the price one might expect to pay for some of these original publications by T. & J. Swords, an original edition of *Brief Retrospect* is still relatively inexpensive to obtain.¹⁹

The *Cambridge History of American Literature* states that Miller's work "is an invaluable resource for study of the early Republic.... The book reviewed both the pros and cons of the technological and cultural developments of the age."²⁰ While the second volume "offered a detailed appraisal of trends in world and American literature," volume one

... provided a sympathetic account of what has since been called the "consumer revolution" of the eighteenth century. Focusing on science and the mechanical and fine arts, Miller applauded the profusion of cheap goods – pottery, glass, stoves, clocks, and so forth – made available by recent inventions and improved methods of manufacture. He also welcomed the increased leisure brought about by the division of labour and by time-saving devices in the workplace and the home.²¹

Miller's work was the "first American intellectual" history,²² and contained many diverse "firsts" within. Volume one is the "first history of science written by a nineteenth-century American author"²³ containing, amongst many items of interest, the "earliest American history of geology,"²⁴ and in volume two, in a section on Chinese Literature, there is "an overview of the influence of China in Europe, the first to be written in the Western hemisphere."²⁵

Miller got the idea for *A Brief Retrospect* from a century sermon he preached on the same subject.

... while still in New York, and just at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he delivered to his congregation a sermon on the century just then closed. So impressed were those who listened to it with the writer's grasp of the subject and with its admirable generalizations, that they asked for its publication. The writer, on the contrary, was struck with its fragmentary character and its incompleteness in every sense. His dissatisfaction with it led him to plan and to write in three volumes the First Part (for he had in mind three more parts) of *The Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*.²⁶

In the introduction to the Thoemmes edition of *Brief Retrospect*, Roger Fechner states the work

... was an extraordinary, encyclopedic tour de force and, ultimately, the most important book he produced during his long lifetime. He was already a prominent minister in New York City and an aspiring author whose goal was to become a member of the international literati in the Atlantic republic of letters. Although he intended to publish it in 1803 (the title-page reflects his original publication date²⁷), the manuscript was not completed until early December and published by T. and J. Swords in January 1804. Like many early nineteenth-century books, the title was deceptive, for neither its full title, *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century, Part First In Two Volumes Containing A Sketch of the Revolutions and Improvements in Science, Arts, and Literature During that Period*, nor its length, 1,074 pages, was brief. As long as it was, however, Miller's massive work was incomplete, for he had planned three additional sections on church history and theology, ethics, and political thought and politics, which he never finished. Not only was *A Brief Retrospect* the first history of ideas by an American author, but it was also a window into United States cultural and intellectual life against the backgrounds of the European Enlightenment and American society in the Early Republic.

Even though his plan for *Brief Retrospect* was not fully realized, and while some chapters are better than others, Miller covers an amazing number of topics in twenty-six chapters: (vol. 1) 1. Mechanical Philosophy; 2. Chemical Philosophy; 3. Natural History; 4. Medicine; 5. Geography; 6. Mathematics; 7. Navigation; 8. Agriculture; 9. Mechanic Arts; 10. Fine Arts; 11. Physiognomy; (vol 2) 12. Philosophy of the Human Mind; 13. Classic Literature; 14. Oriental Literature; 15. Modern Languages; 16. Philosophy of Language; 17. History; 18. Biography; 19. Romances and Novels; 20. Poetry; 21. Literary Journals; 22. Political Journals; 23. Literary and Scientific Associations; 24. Encyclopaedias, &c.; 25. Education; 26. Nations Lately Become Literary.

Despite "contradictions and flaws" in the book Fechner gives the opinion that

Miller's history was a major undertaking, a striking work for a number of reasons and deserving of careful attention from students of the Enlightenment. It was a groundbreaking study in cultural and intellectual history. Although it is over 1000 pages and incomplete, it is still a useful summary of a considerable body of eighteenth-century thought in science, agriculture, medicine, philosophy, art, literature, and education. Miller's approach to Enlightenment thought also has a contemporary ring to it because of its comparative thrust. Although he rightly focused most of his attention on European thinkers and thought, Miller paid considerable attention to American intellectuals and

22. "... he is remembered for his two-volume *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (1803), one of the first American intellectual histories." Donald K. McKim, David F. Wright, *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992) 241.

23. Roger Fechner, ed., "Introduction," Samuel Miller, *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2001) v-xi. Online in archive at <http://tinyurl.com/2gngct>.

24. George Willard White, "Reference Books for History of Geology," in *Essays on History of Geology* (New York, Arno Press, 1978) multiple paginations, 29.

25. Alfred Owen Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: The Presence of China in the American Enlightenment* (Wayne State University Press, 1993) 14.

26. John De Witt, "The Intellectual Life of Samuel Miller, The Opening Address of the Session 1905-06 at Princeton Theological Seminary," *The Princeton Theological Review* (April 1906) 179.

27. Miller's dedication to John Dickinson is dated November 25, 1803. A notice only in volume two states, "*District of New-York, ss. Be it remembered, That on the seventh day of December, in the twenty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America [i.e. December 7, 1803], Samuel Miller, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a book....*" However, evidently due to delays the work did not come out until January 1804 (*Life of Miller*, 173; Fechner, v).

their ideas as a vital part of the Atlantic cultural discourse of the time. Miller was also correct in emphasizing the greatest thinkers in every field of thought he examined, but his analysis – however lacking in depth on occasion – also included many minor figures whose ideas have usually been ignored in recent and contemporary histories of the Enlightenment.

Fechner is critical of Miller's Calvinism²⁸ and of some of his handling of the Enlightenment, but nevertheless concludes: "Miller's minor classic is not only valuable as a primary and a secondary source for understanding the Enlightenment, but it is also significant as the earliest example in the historiography of United States intellectual history and as a major example of the tension between faith and reason in the cultural and intellectual milieu of American society at the beginning of the nineteenth century."

Two Streams of Influence in Miller's Brief Retrospect

As a Presbyterian minister and as an associate of the Friendly club, Miller forms an intersection of authors of religious material and those of literary and scientific pieces published by T. & J. Swords. According to Fechner, two general streams of influence contributed to the production of *Brief Retrospect*. The first was Miller's initial schooling and training by his father and his subsequent studies under Charles Nisbet, president of Dickinson College, an influence Miller does not hide and other authors note. "Nisbet's broad knowledge of Enlightenment thinkers impressed his young charge so much that when Miller began to collect and organize materials for his work years later he asked his teacher's advice on what to include. Nisbet recommended the inclusion of the ideas of an exceptionally wide range of eighteenth-century European and American intellectuals" (Fechner).

Less commonly explored perhaps is the great influence the discussions of the associates of the Friendly club had on Miller. "There can be little doubt that Miller's active engagement in the club did much to shape his outlook and led directly to his focus on Enlightenment thought in *A Brief Retrospect*, for one of the major activities of the Club's members was to read and discuss the works of eighteenth-century European thinkers" (Fechner).

28. "Miller, too much the traditional Calvinist, rejected what he thought were the mistaken conclusions of secular philosophers, that material and moral progress would result in human perfection, and their overly confident assumption that advances in the sciences would result in higher moral standards in society, a conservative position that became one of the major strains in American intellectual culture in the first half of the nineteenth century" (Fechner).

29. *Medical Works of Edward Miller*, xiii; xiv; *Life of Samuel Miller*, 1.175–176.

In keeping with the spirit of the time, Miller declares in his preface that: "He is also bound in candour to declare, that his own instruction and improvement were among his principal motives in undertaking and prosecuting this work. Being persuaded that writing on a subject is one of the best means of methodizing and correcting one's own views of it; and hoping that, while he informed himself, he might amuse, if not instruct others, he submitted to the toil of collecting and arranging the materials which are here presented." He also made it very clear that he could not have completed *Brief Retrospect* without help and readily admitted the nature of the work as a compilation. "Though the greater part of this work consists of compilation; yet the writer claims to be something more than a mere compiler. He has offered, where he thought proper, opinions, reflections, and reasonings of his own; and though many of these are adopted, perhaps too hastily, from others, there are some of which all the praise and all the blame belong to himself. He is not, however, solicitous to discriminate, even if it were possible, between these several parts of the work. If the exhibition of facts and opinions, so far as it goes, be tolerably just, the question whence they originated is of little consequence to the reader" (*Brief Retrospect*, ix). And in perhaps a reference to his fellow Friendly associates, he closes his preface: "The reader is particularly requested not to over-look the *Additional Notes*. They will be found to supply some of the deficiencies, and to correct some of the errors with which the body of the work abounds. About an *eighth* or *tenth* part of these notes are derived from the remarks of friends. It was at first intended to make a particular acknowledgment to every individual who had furnished any thing of this kind; but, for cogent reasons, a general acknowledgment was afterwards thought preferable" (xiv).

Miller later acknowledged in the biography of his brother, that the part of the work on Medicine was largely written by Edward Miller, and rates it as probably the longest and "best part" of the *Brief Retrospect*.²⁹ Fechner notes that Charles Brockden Brown contributed, and it is easy to imagine Dr. Mitchill may have, as well as William Dunlap, who might have lent a hand to the section dealing with the German playwrights, and Kotzebue in particular (2.220–222).

Dr. Miller was also not hesitant to mention the work of some of his accomplished Friendly associates and other friends. Under "Zoology" he mentions Mitchell in the same space as Jefferson as Americans worthy of respect in giving "new and valuable descriptions of particular animals which came under their observation" (1.127). Under the section on American medicine he writes on the *Medical Repository* (1.325–326):

In the year 1797, a periodical publication, under the title of the Medical Repository, was commenced by Drs. Mitchell, Miller, and Smith, which, from the peculiar circumstances of our country, may be considered as an important event, in noting the successive steps of medical improvement in the United States. In the premature death of the last named gentleman, who bid fair to attain the most honourable eminence in his profession, this work sustained a great loss. It is still, however, prosecuted with undiminished excellence and success; and furnishes at once very reputable specimens of learning, talents and zeal of many American physicians; and a most useful vehicle for conveying to the public a knowledge of every improvement in the science of medicine.”

In a footnote Miller wrote a brief biographical note on Dr. Smith and continued:

“The surviving Editors of the Medical Repository speak of their deceased colleague in the following honourable terms.”

As a physician, his loss is irreparable. He had explored, at his early age, an extent of medical learning, for which the longest lives are seldom found sufficient. His diligence and activity, his ardour and perseverance, knew no common bounds. The love of science and the impulse of philanthropy directed his whole professional career, and left little room for the calculations of emolument. He had formed vast designs of medical improvement, which embraced the whole family of mankind, were animated by the soul of benevolence, and aspired after every object of a liberal and dignified ambition. His writings, already published, incessantly awaken regret, that the number of them is not greater. They display singular diligence and acuteness of research, the talents of accurate and extensive observation, great force and precision of reasoning, and the range of a vigorous and comprehensive mind.” *Medical Repository*, v.ii. p. 214, 215. *second [sic] Edition*.

Presbyterian minister that he was, Miller was not happy with the growing practice of the day of reading novels, and his views expressed on Romances and Novels are decidedly negative.³⁰ However, he commends the work of his fellow Friendly, Charles Brockden Brown (2.171):

America has given birth to few productions in the department of romance or novel. Indeed, no work of

this nature deserving respectful notice had appeared in the United States prior to the year 1798, when Mr. Charles Brockden Brown, of Philadelphia, published his *Wieland*, which has been since followed by *Ormond*, *Arthur Mervyn*, *Edgar Huntly*, and *Jane Talbot*, from the pen of the same author. Mr. Brown discovers, in these several productions, a vigorous imagination, a creative fancy, strong powers of description, and great command, and, in general, great felicity of language. He has the honour of being the first American who presented his countrymen with a respectable specimen of fictitious history; and is certainly the first who succeeded in gaining much attention to his labours in this branch of literature.

Sadly, the 1799 ARP Standards and Miller’s *Brief Retrospect* were to be the only large works by Presbyterians published by T. & J. Swords. The same year of 1804 in which the *Brief Retrospect* appeared, there began a controversy which would shatter the good relations the Protestant Episcopal Church shared with the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the City of New York. Since much of the polemic material from the Episcopalian side would come from the Swords’ press, the Presbyterians began resorting to other shops for their publications.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

CHRIS COLDWELL ■

30. “His preacher side – *A Brief Retrospect* began as a sermon – got the better of the historian in his discussion of the novel and, to a lesser extent, in his remarks on the commercializing of authorship. Miller praised Charles Brockden Brown as the only American novelist ‘deserving respectful notice,’ but his overall assessment of the new genre was sharply negative. No more than one novel out of a thousand could be read for improvement; the rest were either frivolous or ‘seductive and corrupting.’ Miller saw the novel’s rise as an unfortunate consequence of the invasion of letters by the commercial spirit. He noted that a new determinant of value, the market, had entered culture in the eighteenth century, leading artists away from commitment to truth and social utility and narrowing their vision to the sordid calculation of profit. All too often men and women now wrote ‘in accommodation to the *public taste*, however depraved, and with a view to the most *advantageous sale*.’ The novel, with its great circulation and shameless pandering to prurient interest, was one result; others, Miller complained, included the hasty production of worthless books and a lessening of the author’s standing in public esteem.” *Cambridge History of American Literature*, 565–566.