

### Chapter 3

# Medicine and Miracles in the Late Seventeenth Century: Bernard Connor's *Evangelium Medici* (1697)

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The people of seventeenth-century Ireland lived in what Raymond Gillespie has called 'a world of wonders', where everyday and unusual occurrences were understood in the context of God's providential role in people's lives.<sup>1</sup> While the official doctrine of the Church of Ireland held that miracles had long ceased, ill-health and recovery were ascribed by followers of all Christian denominations to divine intervention and studied for the religious messages that they could reveal. However, Gillespie also notes that 'by the end of the century there was increasing scepticism about wonder stories as the educated looked for alternative explanations, a development which helped to destroy the comfortable world of hearsay, tradition and private judgement.'<sup>2</sup> Improving standards of medical knowledge and training in the seventeenth century had a significant part to play in effecting this change. The Irish physician, Bernard Connor (c. 1666–98), provided an illustration in 1698, when he recalled an episode he had witnessed in Rome a few years earlier:

... passing by chance through the Strada del Popolo I saw a multitude of people hurrying a man to St Mark's Chappel, which belongs to the Venetian Embassadors; they told me he was possess'd by the devil, and that they were carrying him to be exorcis'd; I crowded through the throng into the church, and felt the man's pulse; I found him in a Fever, making hideous grimaces and motions with his face, eyes, tongue, and all his limbs, which were nothing else but a fit of convulsive motions all over his body, occasion'd by a disorder of his blood and spirits, being a hypochondriacal person. The clergy and people began very devoutly to fright the pretended devil out of him, and in a little time his disorderly motions ceased, which as they thought to be the miraculous effect

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted people: belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p. 108.

of their prayers, I attributed to the natural abatement and the usual cessation of such fits.<sup>3</sup>

Connor believed that 'wilful mistakes' and 'ignorance' elevated natural events, like this, into supernatural ones. However, he also maintained that miraculous events could happen and argued that the physician was ideally placed to distinguish between them and natural occurrences.<sup>4</sup> In 1697 he published a controversial work on miracles, *Evangelium Medici: seu Medicina Mystica; De Suspensis Naturæ Legibus, sive De Miraculis*, which illustrates the implications of the mechanical philosophy for both medicine and the miraculous.<sup>5</sup> The book attempted to reconcile the possibility of miracles with novel medical ideas, especially those associated with the mechanical philosophy. Connor's work is particularly interesting on account of his Irish Catholic background, his extensive continental connections and his apparent religious ambiguity.

Connor's brief but remarkable career has not passed unnoticed. The Irish medical historians John Knott (1907), W.R. Le Fanu (1964) and, more recently, Davis Coakley (1992) have summarised his achievements.<sup>6</sup> Baruch S. and Jean L. Blumberg (1958) have highlighted his authorship of one of the first known descriptions of ankylosing spondylitis.<sup>7</sup> S. Szpilczynski (1974) has contributed an important article on Connor's 'contribution to the development of medical

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Connor, *The history of Poland, in several letters to persons of quality ... with several letters relating to physick ... publish'd by the care and assistance of Mr. Savage* (2 vols, London: 1698), vol. 1, pp. 317–18[II]. The pagination in both volumes of this work is irregular. In volume one pp. 1–352 are followed by a new pagination bearing the numbers 289–322. In volume two, pp. 1–236 are followed by new pagination numbered pp. 1–120 and an unpaginated table of contents. References to the second series of page numbers in volumes one and two are indicated by '[II]'.

<sup>4</sup> Connor, *The history of Poland*, vol. 1, pp. 317–18[II].

<sup>5</sup> The title may be translated as: 'The gospel of a doctor, or, mystic medicine; concerning the suspension of the laws of nature, or concerning miracles'. References in this article are to the first edition published in London in 1697. The pagination in the work is irregular. Pages 1–208 are followed by a new pagination numbered pp. 1–38 and an unpaginated table of contents. References to the second series of page numbers are indicated by '[II]'.

<sup>6</sup> John Knott, 'Bernard Connor: a forgotten Irish medical exile and scientific pioneer of the seventeenth century (1666–1698)', *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, 133 (January–February 1907): 131–44; W.R. Le Fanu, 'Two Irish doctors in England in the seventeenth century', *Irish Journal of Medical Science* (July 1964): 303–9; Davis Coakley, *Irish masters of medicine* (Dublin: Town House, 1992), pp. 15–25.

<sup>7</sup> Baruch S. Blumberg and Jean L. Blumberg, 'Bernard Connor (1666–1698) and his contribution to the pathology of ankylosing spondylitis', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Applied Sciences*, 13 (1958): 349–66.

thinking' in which he traces the sources of Connor's medical ideas.<sup>8</sup> Research on Connor was synthesised and augmented in 1981 by R.H. Dalitz and G.C. Stone in an article that focused primarily on Connor's *History of Poland*, an important two-volume work published in 1698.<sup>9</sup> Yet, Connor's most controversial book, *Evangelium Medici*, has received little attention. Knott provided an idiosyncratic assessment, concluding that 'every sentence scintillates with originality of thought and brilliancy of genius'.<sup>10</sup> Le Fanu was less convinced, noting that 'it is full of unusual observation and strange speculations, but its general effect is the opposite of what he intended'.<sup>11</sup> This paper locates *Evangelium Medici* in the debates about religion, medicine and the mechanical philosophy that took place in the late seventeenth century. It briefly assesses conceptions of the miraculous during this period and considers Bernard Connor's medical ideas, before assessing the genesis and content of *Evangelium Medici*.

### Conceptions of the miraculous in the seventeenth century

Connor's work on miracles may be situated within three overlapping contexts: Irish (especially Catholic) attitudes to miracles, attempts to work out the implications of the mechanical philosophy for the miraculous, and the 'great debate' about miracles generated by the deist challenge of the later seventeenth century.

Irish Catholics, with the encouragement of their clergy, understood ill-health, disease, recovery and death within a theology of the miraculous. In his work on miracles the Irish Jesuit, Richard Archdekin, argued that miracles were 'an assured token and prooffe of true religion'.<sup>12</sup> He recognised an important role for

<sup>8</sup> S. Szpilczynski, 'Bernard O'Connor from Ireland: aulic physician to the Polish King Jan III Sobieski. A contribution to the development of medical thinking at the turn of the seventeenth century', *Proceedings of the XXIII international congress of the history of medicine* (London: Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1974), pp. 762–71.

<sup>9</sup> R.H. Dalitz and G.C. Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor: physician to King Jan III Sobieski and author of the History of Poland (1698)', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 14 (1981): 14–35; Gerald Stone has also authored the entry on Connor in the *ODNB*, sub Bernard Connor. The present author contributed a short entry on Connor to Thomas Duddy (ed.), *Dictionary of Irish philosophers* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2004), pp. 83–6. Róisín Healy has recently assessed Connor's *History* in 'The view from the margins: Ireland and Poland–Lithuania, 1698–1798' in Richard Unger, with the assistance of Jakub Basista (eds), *Britain and Poland–Lithuania: contact and comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 355–74. I wish to thank Dr Healy for her comments on an earlier draft of this article.

<sup>10</sup> Knott, 'Bernard Connor', 143.

<sup>11</sup> Le Fanu, 'Two Irish doctors', 308.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Archdekin, *A treatise of miracles together with new miracles and benefits obtained by the sacred reliques of S. Francis Xaverius exposed in the Church of the Soc. of Jesus at Mechlin* (Louvain, 1667), p. 3.

medical practitioners in the authentication of miracles. To accusations of trickery, Archdekin responded that:

Catholicks never use to give out for miracles any effect that can be performed by human arte, but onely such things as are found to surpass the ordinarie reach and power of nature, as the raising of the dead, the curing of some incurable sickness; or where the cure was soe suddain that by acknowledgment of doctors it could not be naturally performed in so short a time.<sup>13</sup>

Archdekin stressed three levels of authority: ecclesiastical approval, legally certified evidence and the testimony of 'skillful doctors, surgeons and other witnesses who could have knowledge of the matter'.<sup>14</sup> The miracles recounted in his work, which took place in Mechelen and various parts of Ireland and involved the relics of the Jesuit saint, Francis Xavier, frequently occurred in cases where physicians were unable to assist their patients. Indeed, physicians encouraged patients to seek divinely inspired remedies.<sup>15</sup> The testimony of physicians was very important. In one case, involving the cure of a young woman, the official account recorded that 'the two prime doctors and professors of medicine' in Louvain agreed that 'this recovering of strength in so short a tyme, was above the ordinary force of nature and could not otherwise be obtained than by divine favour'.<sup>16</sup>

While the miraculous remained important in seventeenth-century Ireland and England, the growing influence of an experimental and mechanical natural philosophy ensured that alleged miraculous events were subject to more intense scrutiny.<sup>17</sup> Jane Shaw has identified the healing activities of Valentine Greatrakes, 'the Irish stroker', in England during 1666 as a turning point. Robert Boyle and others took a keen interest in Greatrakes' activities and sought to identify mechanical explanations. However, they also wished to leave open the possibility that miracles *could* happen. Shaw comments that 'many suggested or implied that natural or mechanical explanations would be offered in the majority of cases that people claimed as miracles, but that divine intervention remained a plausible explanation, at least upon very great evidence'.<sup>18</sup> In Ireland, the Dublin Philosophical Society is

<sup>13</sup> Archdekin, *A treatise*, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Archdekin, *A treatise*, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Archdekin, *A treatise*, pp. 45–7, 51, 57, 59–60, 64–6, 69–70, 74–5, 77, 79, 82–3, 84–8, 90, 95–6, 105.

<sup>16</sup> Archdekin, *A treatise*, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> For Ireland see Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp. 107–26. For England see Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006); William E. Burns, *An age of wonders: prodigies, politics and providence in England, 1657–1727* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Peter Dear, 'Miracles, experiments and the ordinary course of nature', *Iris*, 81/4 (1990): 663–83

<sup>18</sup> Shaw, *Miracles*, pp. 96–7; Caoimhghin S. Breathnach, 'Robert Boyle's approach to the ministrations of Valentine Greatrakes', *History of Psychiatry*, 10 (1999): 87–109.

not recorded as discussing miracles specifically, but Hoppen has pointed out that members saw no contradiction between their natural philosophy and their religious sympathies.<sup>19</sup> In December 1683, Robert Huntington explained that ‘several of the number meet at five upon Sunday nights (as the whole Company does on Mondays) to discourse theologically, of God suppose, and his attributes, and how to establish religion, and confute atheism, by reason, evidence, and demonstration’.<sup>20</sup> One Dublin Philosophical Society member, Richard Bulkeley, who gained a reputation as an inventor and experimentalist, even threw his lot in with the French Prophets, a miracle-working Huguenot group, when they arrived in England in the early eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> However, most natural philosophers of the period preferred to chart a course between what they thought of as two extremes: the fanaticism of a Bulkeley or Archdekin and an opposing and increasingly influential tendency, the denial of miracles by the deists.

The ‘great debate on miracles’ was underway in England and Scotland by the end of the seventeenth century and culminated in Hume’s famous essay of 1748.<sup>22</sup> Baruch Spinoza’s outright denial of miracles in the *Tractatus Politico-Theologicus* (1670) was one important influence on a generation of English deists. As Jonathan Israel has pointed out: ‘since miracles were seen as the “first pillar” of faith, authority and tradition by theologians at the time, Spinoza’s rejection of the possibility of miracles seemed to bring all accepted beliefs, the very basis of contemporary culture, into question.’<sup>23</sup> Spinoza’s chapter on miracles was translated (rather freely) into English by Charles Blount and published anonymously in *Miracles, no violations of the laws of nature* (1683). The response was muted, and it was not until the publication of John Toland’s *Christianity not mysterious* (1696) that the deist attack on Christian revelation and the miraculous can be said to have taken shape. ‘When all other shifts prove ineffectual’, wrote Toland, ‘the partizans of mystery fly to miracles as their last refuge’.<sup>24</sup> Toland’s work was published towards the end of 1695 (though it was dated 1696 to avoid complications arising

<sup>19</sup> K. Theodore Hoppen, *The common scientist in the seventeenth century: a study of the Dublin Philosophical Society, 1683–1708* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 80–84.

<sup>20</sup> K. Theodore Hoppen, ‘The Royal Society and Ireland II’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 20/1 (1965), 78–99 (79).

<sup>21</sup> On Bulkeley, see Shaw, *Miracles*, pp. 151–7; Hoppen, *Common scientist*, pp. 40, 186; Toby Barnard, ‘Reforming Irish manners: the religious societies in Dublin during the 1690s’, *Historical Journal*, 35/4 (1992): 805–38 (818).

<sup>22</sup> R.M. Burns, *The great debate on miracles from Joseph Glanvill to David Hume* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p. 219, and pp. 599–627 for Spinoza’s influence on English deism.

<sup>24</sup> John Toland, *Christianity not mysterious* (London, 1696), p. 144.

from the Licensing Act) and his comments on miracles are relevant to Connor's *Evangelium Medici*, published less than two years later. For Toland:

A miracle then is some action exceeding all human power, and which the laws of nature cannot perform by their ordinary operations ... Now whatever is contrary to reason can be no miracle, for it has been sufficiently prov'd already, that contradiction is only another word for impossible or nothing. The miraculous action must therefore be some thing in itself intelligible and possible tho the manner of doing it be extraordinary.<sup>25</sup>

Since Toland rejected John Locke's case for accepting propositions 'above reason', it is difficult to assess the 'divine miracles' that Toland appeared to retain.<sup>26</sup> In any event, just as Bernard Connor arrived in England, probably for the first time, the debate about miracles was well underway, and a cause of considerable dissension among the intellectual elite.

### The life and medical ideas of Bernard Connor

Bernard Connor was born in Ireland, possibly in county Kerry, around 1666.<sup>27</sup> In the sermon he preached at Connor's funeral, William Hayley stated that Connor was born a Catholic and that he 'remained in his own country, as I am informed by his friends, till about the twentieth year of his age; when in order to cultivate his studies, and to apply his mind to physick, and work out his fortune, he betook himself to travel.'<sup>28</sup> Connor graduated as a doctor of medicine from the University of Reims on 18 September 1693, but he also had associations with medical circles in Montpellier and Paris.<sup>29</sup> Connor mentioned that he lived for a time in Montpellier, and eighteenth-century authorities state that he studied there.<sup>30</sup> Connor also claimed that he lectured at Paris, possibly in connection with his

<sup>25</sup> Toland, *Christianity*, pp. 144–5.

<sup>26</sup> Toland, *Christianity*, pp. 146–51. For Locke on miracles see Burns, *The great debate*, pp. 57–69; J.J. Macintosh, 'Locke and Boyle on miracles and God's existence' in Michael Hunter (ed.), *Robert Boyle reconsidered* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 193–214.

<sup>27</sup> For discussion of this point see Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 15–16.

<sup>28</sup> William Hayley, *A sermon preached in the parish Church of St. Giles in the Fields at the funeral of Bernard Connor, M.D. who departed this life, Oct. 30. 1698, with a short account of his life and death* (London, 1699), p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> For discussion of Irish attendance at these universities see Lyons chapter 1 and Brockliss chapter 5 in this collection.

<sup>30</sup> For discussion on this point see Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 16–18.

membership of the *Chambre Royale de Medicine*.<sup>31</sup> Assuming that Connor arrived in France in the mid to late 1680s, he would have encountered a medical curriculum based on an elastic Galenism, which had integrated aspects of the iatrochemical approach. However, evidence from the University of Paris indicates that the more fundamental shift, involving the challenge of iatromechanism, occurred only in the mid-1690s.<sup>32</sup> This may explain Connor's attraction to the *Chambre Royale* which, as Brockliss and Jones have noted, was 'an institutional front for iatromechanism in a period when the new medical ideology had no support within the faculties.'<sup>33</sup>

The *Chambre Royale* was dissolved as a result of pressure from the Paris Faculty of Medicine in the early summer of 1694. Later that year Connor accompanied the sons of Jan Wielopolski, the crown chancellor of Poland, on a journey from Paris to Warsaw. The trip amounted to a grand tour through the Italian states and central Europe, as well as Poland, and it provided Connor with an opportunity to expand his medical knowledge. Along the way, he met with leading medical thinkers, including Marcello Malpighi, Lorenzo Bellini and Francisco Redi, as well as Irish and English travellers.<sup>34</sup> Connor's medical education and networking meant he was well schooled in the university curriculum and the novel ideas of the iatromechanists. His published work in the 1690s reflects these influences and his commitment to integrate them into a 'new' system.

Connor's sceptical attitude to Aristotelian and Galenic authority in natural philosophy and medicine emerge clearly from his account of his Polish sojourn. As a result of connections he made in Venice, Connor was engaged as a physician to the ailing Polish king, John Sobieski.<sup>35</sup> Shortly after his arrival Connor was consulted on the illness of the king's sister. He diagnosed 'an ague fomented by an abscess of the liver' and delivered a much bleaker prognosis than his Polish colleagues. When the princess died, Connor's diagnosis was confirmed and his medical reputation was correspondingly enhanced.<sup>36</sup> In general, Connor was critical of the state of medical knowledge in Poland.<sup>37</sup> Logic and metaphysics were, he believed, rooted in Aristotle's philosophy, though there was little agreement among his followers.<sup>38</sup> There were few native physicians because the expense of studying medicine was

<sup>31</sup> Bernard Connor, *Dissertationes medico-physicae* (Oxford, 1695), title page; Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 289[II].

<sup>32</sup> Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The medical world of early modern France* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp. 90–169, 411–33; L.W.B. Brockliss, *French higher education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a cultural history* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), pp. 391–443; L.W.B. Brockliss, 'Medical teaching at the University of Paris, 1600–1720', *Annals of Science*, 35 (1978): 221–251.

<sup>33</sup> Brockliss and Jones, *The medical world*, p. 419, n. 38.

<sup>34</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 289[II].

<sup>35</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 2. On his Venetian connections see p. 153.

<sup>36</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 198–201.

<sup>37</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 74–97[II].

<sup>38</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 78–9[II]; also notes a penchant for Albertus Magnus.

too great for any but the wealthiest, who were generally unprepared to invest the time and effort necessary to qualify.<sup>39</sup> As a result, Polish medical practice was 'very imperfect' and 'the medicines which they use are altogether Galenical, and those always of the worsser sort'.<sup>40</sup>

These criticisms notwithstanding, Connor noted approvingly that the monarch was interested in the 'modern philosophy', and on one occasion encouraged a debate involving Connor and a number of Polish bishops and clergy concerning the location of the soul in the body.<sup>41</sup> By his own account, Connor reluctantly proffered his view that the soul 'must be only in the brain which is the seat of sensation, and the origin of all the nerves, which are the organs of perception and motion.'<sup>42</sup> Father Vota, a Jesuit, responded that if the soul resided only in the brain, the rest of the body would be dead, because the soul was 'the life of the whole body'.<sup>43</sup> Connor rejected this Aristotelian conception of the soul and instead proposed one consistent with a mechanical philosophy:

That the rational soul was not the life of the body, but the blood only and the animal spirits, and that this blood and spirits circulated equally all over the body, and gave it its natural heat and motion, which is properly its life: and that this circulation of the blood and spirits could not possibly depend on the rational soul, because it was an involuntary motion formed by the mechanical structure of the body and by the natural impulse of the heart, which is the *primum mobile* of the whole machine; and that tho they all held, not only in Poland, but in other countries, that the rational soul perform'd every minute action in the body, yet this opinion was irreconcilable with the free will of the mind, which they all admitted, for since they allow that whatever the soul does, not only it is conscious of it, but likewise does it freely without being necessitated thereto; when as it is evidently obvious to everyone, that the vital motions in our bodies, I mean the motion of the heart, and that of respiration, with the peristaltic motion of the stomach and guts, are performed naturally with such mechanism that the soul can't stop them, no nor as much as hasten or retard them, and that the soul is not at all conscious of them; for if we think of any object, or not think at all, as when we are asleep, or in an apoplex, those vital motions go on equally the same.<sup>44</sup>

To the objection that human beings were therefore no different to animals, Connor responded that the soul 'performed all voluntary motions' and therefore acted like

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<sup>39</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 2, p. 82[II]; he makes an interesting aside on the same page noting that persons of the meanest birth make the best scientists.

<sup>40</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 2, p. 89[II].

<sup>41</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 179–80.

<sup>42</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 181.

<sup>43</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 181.

<sup>44</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 181–2.



a pilot in the body.<sup>45</sup> A consequence of Connor's theory was that death was not caused by the departure of the soul from the body, rather it was the 'cessation of the motions of the heart, of the blood and of the spirits', which did not depend on the soul. The soul departed the body only after this cessation.<sup>46</sup> The Jesuit priest condemned Connor's 'heretical opinions (as they called them)'. For Connor, the debate illustrated the strength of clerical attachment to Aristotelianism 'not only in Poland, but in Spain, Italy and in most other countries where their power is very great' and the fear that 'if experience and reason shake the foundation, the superstructure would fall to the ground, as doubtless it would for the most part.'<sup>47</sup>

John Sobieski's deteriorating health and Connor's insecure position at the Polish court prompted him to leave. In January 1695, he accompanied Princess Teresa Cunegunda on a journey to Brussels before travelling on, via Holland, to England, where he arrived in February 1695.<sup>48</sup> He quickly established himself in English medical and scientific circles. During 1695 and 1696 Connor gave anatomical demonstrations in Oxford, London and Cambridge. He was also elected a fellow of the Royal Society and admitted as a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians.<sup>49</sup> By October 1695, he had established a medical practice in London.<sup>50</sup>

Connor's rapid assimilation into the English medical establishment was assisted by the patronage network that he cultivated. He had, as already noted, made the acquaintance of a number of English and Irish aristocrats while on the continent, most significantly William Legge, first earl of Dartmouth, whom he treated.<sup>51</sup> He was fully aware of the value of eminent patrons, as his published works each contain a series of dedications to members of the English peerage and to eminent medical practitioners.<sup>52</sup> It is difficult to know how many of these were known personally to Connor, but such evidence as there is suggests that

<sup>45</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 181–2.

<sup>46</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 183.

<sup>47</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>48</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 193–8. He passed through Mechelen, the location of the miracles recounted by Richard Archdekin, *en route* (p. 198). Connor was consulted on the king's health after his departure (pp. 201–4).

<sup>49</sup> For an account see, Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 22–27. Connor was ineligible for a fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians on account of his foreign MD. On the distinction between fellows and licentiates see Harold J. Cook, *The decline of the old medical regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 72–4.

<sup>50</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 290[II].

<sup>51</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> For dedications in the *History* see Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 28–9. The *Dissertationes* were dedicated to Thomas Herbert, eighth earl of Pembroke and fifth earl of Montgomery, John Radcliffe, Edward Browne and Hans Sloane. *Evangelium Medici* was dedicated to Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax (1661–1715); this work also

he possessed strong links to the medical and intellectual elites, including Hans Sloane, who assisted him in early 1695.<sup>53</sup> Another prominent fellow of the Royal Society, Richard Waller let it be known that he was translating a treatise by Connor in 1697.<sup>54</sup> Connor was also in contact with John Radcliffe and James Tyrrell.<sup>55</sup> The latter, who was described by Connor as 'a true friend', was in turn a close friend of Locke and a brother-in-law of Charles Blount (who died before Connor arrived in England in 1693). A grandson of James Ussher, he visited Ireland in the early 1670s and wrote an uncomplimentary essay 'On the Irish' in 1673.<sup>56</sup> Connor noted in *Evangelium Medici* that he had discussed miracles with 'D.B.M.', who he described as a 'kinsman' of 'the author of Religio medici'. Presumably this was Dr Edward Browne (a physician who had travelled and written extensively on Eastern Europe) or, possibly, his son Thomas Browne, respectively the son and grandson of Sir Thomas Browne. The connection would explain the controversial title of Connor's work.<sup>57</sup> In early 1696, he was working on 'chymical and anatomical experiments' in the library of Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>58</sup>

Connor had published on a range of medical subjects in 1693 and 1694, while he was still resident on the continent.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, a paper written by him on a 'large

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contained a letter to his 'friend', 'D.B.M.', and an essay entitled 'De Secretione Animalium' dedicated to Edward and Robert Southwell.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Connor to Hans Sloane, 28 May 1695 (BL, Sloane MS 4036, fols 213–14v). Sloane studied in Paris and Montpellier in the early 1680s, *ODNB*, *sub* Hans Sloane.

<sup>54</sup> Margaret J.M. Ezell, 'Richard Waller, F.R.S.: "In the pursuit of nature"', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 38 (1984): 215–33 (220–21). Ezell identifies this as Connor's contribution to the *Philosophical Transactions*, but it was more likely to have been *Evangelium Medici*. Presumably the adverse publicity surrounding the publication put Waller off.

<sup>55</sup> Connor to Sloane, 28 May 1695 (BL, Sloane MS 4036, fols 213–14v).

<sup>56</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 301[II]; J.W. Gough, 'James Tyrrell, Whig historian, and friend of John Locke', *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976): 581–610.

<sup>57</sup> *Evangelium Medici*, epistola, pp. i, vii. Connor dedicated one of the sections of his *Dissertationes* to Edward Browne and mentions to Hans Sloane that he was forwarding a copy to 'Dr Browne' (Connor to Sloane, 28 May 1695, see note 55). A 'T. Brown' gave a positive account of *Evangelium Medici* to Joseph Raphson, a fellow of the Royal Society, on behalf of the author in 1697 (John Wilmot, *Familiar letters* (2nd edn, London, 1697), pp. 114–17). See also footnote 52.

<sup>58</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 307[II].

<sup>59</sup> 'Description physique d'une masse de chair pesant quarante deux livres et un quart, trouvée dans le ventre d'une femme qui l'avoit portée pendant vingt cinq ans', *Journal des Sçavans* (Amsterdam, 1693); 'Lettre écrite a M. le Chevalier G. de Waldegrave, premier médecin de sa majesté Britannique, par M. Bernard O'Connor ... contenant une description physique de la fabrique surprenante d'un tronc de squelette humain, où les vertèbres, les côtes, l'os sacrum, et les os des iles, qui naturellement sont distincts et séparés, ne sont qu'un seul os continu et inséperable', *Journal des Sçavans* (Amsterdam, 1693), pp. 590–617. The latter was published separately as: *Lettre écrite a Monsieur le Chevalier*

tumour' may have been read to the Royal Society before his arrival in London.<sup>60</sup> While in Oxford he published a new version of these papers: *Dissertationes medico-physicae* (1695).<sup>61</sup> He also published an English language version of his paper on ankylosing spondylitis in the *Philosophical Transactions* in the same year.<sup>62</sup> Connor's fascination with natural curiosities and wonders was shared by the fellows of the Royal Society and he presented specimens collected in Poland to them a few weeks after he arrived in London, in March 1695.<sup>63</sup> This interest in wonders emerges elsewhere in his published work. *The History of Poland* contains discussions of 'rarities', feral children raised by bears in Lithuania, and 'two diseases that are peculiar to the Poles'.<sup>64</sup>

Connor's medical ideas were presented as 'A new plan of an animal oeconomy' to those who attended his anatomical demonstrations at Oxford, London and Cambridge in 1695 and 1696. They also appeared in print (in outline form) in *Evangelium Medici* and as an appendix to the first volume of his *History of Poland* titled: 'A compendious plan of the body of physick'.<sup>65</sup> Connor's 'new plan' drew together medicine, anatomy, chemistry and natural philosophy. His ideas were novel, he claimed, at least in the sense of amalgamating ideas and practices from different disciplines and 'tho several may be more capable of it, yet none can be more willing to communicate it to the publick than I am.'<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Connor strongly asserted a freethinking impulse: 'Since therefore reason and experience

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*Guillaume de Waldegrave ... contenant une dissertation physique sur la continuité de plusieurs os, a l'occasion d'une fabrique surprenante d'un tronc de squelltte humain, etc* (Paris, 1693?) Connor also published: *Zoοθανασιον θαυμαστον seu mirabilis viuentium interitus in charonea Neapolitana crypta. Dissertatio physica, etc.* (Cologne or Venice? 1694). The latter contains a paper titled: 'Nouissimum vesuuii montis incendium'.

<sup>60</sup> *Details of a large tumour by M B Connor*, n.d., (ARS, MS Cl.P/12i/37). This is described as an offprint from a 'journal' printed in Paris, presumably the *Journal des Scavans*, and was apparently read to the Royal Society on 13 May 1691[recte 1693?].

<sup>61</sup> This contained four separately paginated papers: 'De antris lethiferis'; 'De montis vesuuii incendio'; 'De stupendo ossium coalitu'; 'De immani hypogastrii sarcomate'.

<sup>62</sup> 'An extract of a letter to Sir Charles Walgrave, published in French at Paris, giving an account of an extraordinary human skeleton, whose vertebrae of the back, the ribs and several bones down to the *os sacrum*, were all firmly united into one solid bone, without jointing or cartilage', *Philosophical Transactions*, 19 (1695): 21–7.

<sup>63</sup> Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 23.

<sup>64</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 342–50, vol. 2, pp. 82–9, 91–7[11]; Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 181–3.

<sup>65</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 289–310[11]; Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 1–34, 23–38[11].

<sup>66</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 310[11]. His application of a mechanical philosophy to animal oeconomy (that is, physiology) was certainly not new *per se*. The College of Physicians had adopted iatromechanism from the 1660s. On this issue see Theodore Brown, *The mechanical philosophy and the 'animal oeconomy'* (New York: Ayer Publishing, 1981), pp. 121–91.

are our only guides, no body is to take it amiss if I censure such as wrote before me, with as much justice as they did their predecessors; for I'm sworn to no master.<sup>67</sup>

Szpilczynski has maintained that Connor's medical theory amalgamated aspects of Galenic ideas, Paracelsian and iatrochemical influences, and late seventeenth-century mechanical approaches.<sup>68</sup> Drawing on a range of sources, Connor adopted a materialist and atomist theory of the human body and emphasised the importance of anatomy and chemistry for understanding how the body was structured and, ultimately, the effects of remedies for diseases.<sup>69</sup> His medical theory stressed the importance of the circulation of the blood and the role of 'animal spirits': 'The life of man is the correspondence between the soul and the body; but the life of the body is the natural motion of the blood and spirits'.<sup>70</sup> Health depended on the 'due disposition' of the 'organs, springs and humours of the body'. Diseases arose from a 'ferment or matter' caused by some external source, and had their origin in the blood, which transferred them around the body. These destroyed the body's disposition, leading to death. Medicines therefore operated on the 'whole mass of the blood' and could be divided into two classes: 'evacuating' and 'altering'.<sup>71</sup> Above all Connor rejected Galenic pessimism, for if the 'operations of the body are performed by natural causes without miracles' and diseases and their cures can be made 'intelligible', then 'that vulgar maxim, that there's no certainty in physick, will be found most erroneous'.<sup>72</sup>

While Connor considered 'the theory and practice of physick ... one and the same thing', there is little evidence on the nature of Connor's medical practice in London.<sup>73</sup> However, one pamphlet suggests that he was one of those to take advantage of the new opportunities that opened up in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution for the treatment of scrofula, or the king's evil.<sup>74</sup> In 1697, Maurice Tobin, an apothecary, published a pamphlet announcing to the public that he had a secret cure for the disease.<sup>75</sup> Tobin had acquired the cure from Timothy Beaghan,

<sup>67</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 310[II]. This is a reference to the motto of the Royal Society.

<sup>68</sup> Szpilczynski, 'Bernard O'Connor from Ireland', 766–71.

<sup>69</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 302–10[II].

<sup>70</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 298[II]. Generated from blood in the brain, animal spirits 'furnish the soul with ideas in the brain, and convey'd through the nerves to all parts of the body, they are the causes of motion in the muscles and of sense in the five organs, which convey the impression of exterior bodies to the soul.' (p. 297[II]).

<sup>71</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 298–9[II].

<sup>72</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 292[II].

<sup>73</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 292[II].

<sup>74</sup> This was despite Connor's argument that a detailed knowledge base was essential to good medical practice and his rejection of 'quacks and other ignorant pretenders': see Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 302[II].

<sup>75</sup> Maurice Tobin, *A true account of the celebrated secret of Mr Timothy Beaghan, lately killed at the Five Bells Tavern in the Strand, famous for curing the King's Evil*

an illiterate, one-legged ex-soldier, who had in turn acquired it from his wife. After Beaghan was murdered at the Five Bells Tavern in London, Tobin, who had acted as a front for him, sought to publicise the cure.<sup>76</sup> To avoid conflict with the Royal College of Physicians, Tobin imparted the secret to Bernard Connor: 'being an expert anatomist, and well versed in medicines, and in the practice of physick, and having experience myself of his skill in curing often intricate diseases, I have communicated this secret to him, and desired him to appear in it'.<sup>77</sup> Connor sought confirmation that the ingredients were the same as those used by Beaghan and to assure themselves that the result was not harmful, both Tobin and he drank a bottle, which they 'found very agreeable'.<sup>78</sup> Arising out of this, Tobin requested that 'all persons infested with the king's evil, may repair to Doctor Connor in Bowstreet for his advice', while Tobin confined himself to the preparation of the medicine.<sup>79</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that both Tobin and Beaghan, like Connor, were of Irish extraction.<sup>80</sup>

### The genesis and content of *Evangelium Medici*

As he established himself in London, Connor was also working on a treatise on miracles. The origin of this work, according to the author, lay in his participation in a number of 'disputes' in London at which miracles were denied.<sup>81</sup> This was a subject on which Connor was well versed: he had, he observed, 'formerly discoursed with others, both in this and other countries, upon the same subject, and had some years ago drawn up a rude scheme of an essay towards the clearing of this point'.<sup>82</sup> The novelty of Connor's contribution to the debates about miracles was his argument that it was possible to illustrate the manner in which miracles occurred in terms acceptable to human reason.<sup>83</sup> Connor's colleagues urged him to publish his work and he reluctantly prepared a draft essay. However, this was made

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(London, 1697).

<sup>76</sup> Beaghan was murdered on 10 August 1697. William Bird was later acquitted of the murder (The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, ref. F16970901-1 [www.oldbaileyonline.org] accessed on 30 July 2008).

<sup>77</sup> Tobin, *A true account*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>78</sup> Tobin, *A true account*, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Tobin, *A true account*, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> On the conflict between the apothecaries and the Royal College of Physicians in the 1690s see Cook, *The decline of the old medical regime*, pp. 227-240. An apothecary called William Lilley was one of the executors named in Connor's will (Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 32).

<sup>81</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 311[II]; Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, epistola, pp. i-ii.

<sup>82</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 312[II].

<sup>83</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 312[II]; Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, epistola, pp. ii-

public against his wishes, and was not well received. Therefore, Connor explained, 'I at last resolv'd to publish it as soon as I could, seeing persons industriously reported things I never thought of'.<sup>84</sup> In the meantime, Connor published two defences of his work in 1696, one addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the other addressed to 'D.B.M.'<sup>85</sup> The controversy contributed to further publication difficulties. The Royal Society refused to grant a license to the book on the grounds that the subject matter was 'theological and the council therefore thought it not within the cognizance of the society, so it was judged proper not to meddle with it'.<sup>86</sup> The Royal College of Physicians was less reticent and granted imprimatur on 9 April 1697.<sup>87</sup> *Evangelium Medici* was published in London later in the year. The work generated considerable interest, for a second edition appeared in 1697 and, following Connor's premature death two further editions were published abroad in Amsterdam in 1699 and in Jena in 1724.

*Evangelium Medici* posited three states of the human body: natural or healthy, diseased, and supernatural.<sup>88</sup> Flowing from his mechanical conception of the human body, Connor argued that it was possible to, 'reconcile' miracles with the:

structure of the human body and with reason ... For since the human body is entirely composed of matter, and since all this matter arises from countless particles which are separate one from another and possess diverse bulk, position and shape, its condition cannot be changed or preserved in a supernatural manner without the bulk, position and shape of its particles being either varied or preserved.<sup>89</sup>

Connor argued that natural phenomena are produced as a result of three laws of motion:

<sup>84</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 313[I1]; Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, epistola, p. iv.

<sup>85</sup> *A Copy of a Letter sent his grace \*\*\* from Dr. Connor ... concerning his medicina arcana de mystico corporis humani statu: or, a Latin treatise, in which he designs to explain the miracles relating to human bodies, by the principles of physick* (London, 1696); *A letter to his worthy friend, D. B. M. from Dr. Cannon ... concerning his medicina arcana de mystico corporis humani statu: or, a Latin treatise, in which he designs to explain the miracles relating to human bodies, by the principles of physick* (London, 1696).

<sup>86</sup> See Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 30.

<sup>87</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, unpaginated.

<sup>88</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 1–41.

<sup>89</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 36–7. All subsequent translations are by Mr J.R.T. Holland.

1. A body which is moved is moved by another body.
2. A body placed in motion communicates the motion to bodies it encounters, provided that they are not of a huge bulk.
3. A body placed in motion always continues in motion until it communicates the motion to a second body.<sup>90</sup>

Connor then considered the 'true nature of a miracle'.<sup>91</sup> He rejected the proposition that a miracle is 'an amazing effect which strikes the senses with consternation and surpasses the grasp of the intellect'.<sup>92</sup> Many natural phenomena were astonishing, but they were not miracles. Connor also rejected what he termed the 'common' definition of a miracle, that is, 'a supernatural phenomenon produced at the particular command of God'.<sup>93</sup> Connor argued that both natural and supernatural phenomena flowed from God.<sup>94</sup> Since the motion of bodies flowed not from the bodies themselves, but from God, this 'common' definition did not sufficiently distinguish natural and supernatural effects. Therefore Connor proposed a third definition:

A miracle can therefore be correctly defined as an effect produced by the suspension of a law of nature, or of motion. Yet laws can only be suspended by Him who established the laws. Since then the laws of motion have been sanctioned by God alone, they can only be suspended or abolished by God alone. And consequently God alone will be able to perform miracles, or at the least be able to grant to others the power to perform them.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, Connor argued that miracles occur 'for some particular purpose ... so as to reveal God's own decrees'.<sup>96</sup>

The real novelty in Connor's argument is in the next step. He argued that one can conceive of the effects produced by the suspension of the laws of motion, that is, miracles.<sup>97</sup> Just as there were three laws of motion, Connor argued that there were three ways in which they could be suspended:

1. The body will be able to move without the occasion of the motions of a

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<sup>90</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 57.

<sup>91</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 58.

<sup>92</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 58–9.

<sup>93</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 60.

<sup>94</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 41, 56.

<sup>95</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 62.

<sup>96</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 62–3.

<sup>97</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 63.

- second body that collides with it.
2. On the given occasion of the colliding body, the body will be incapable of motion.
  3. The body placed in motion will be able suddenly to lose its motion, without communicating the same motion to a second ambient body.<sup>98</sup>

Connor claimed that this accounted for a series of biblical miracles, to which he confined his discussion.<sup>99</sup>

However, his mechanical philosophy of the human body also ensured that some alleged miracles could not happen. Specifically, he rejected the possibility of bilocation.<sup>100</sup> Clearly different parts of bodies could exist in different places and human bodies could be multiplied, for example, through reproduction.<sup>101</sup> However, because the human body 'is in truth nothing except matter', bilocation is impossible.<sup>102</sup> Yet, Connor still conceived the possibility that God could, in 'a sort of hitherto and unheard of, and yet unique manner' act on a human body so that it was in two places at once, though not with the same size. Even in this case, Connor was unable to accept that a person's soul could be in two places at once.<sup>103</sup> In the end, therefore, Connor concluded that bilocation could not happen. He claimed that he had previously revealed his argument to 'a large number of candid, honest and learned men' who advised him not to make it public, for fear of 'new quarrels among academics ... civil disagreements, and possibly to certain disturbing errors', to which Connor had agreed.<sup>104</sup>

For the most part, *Evangelium Medici* concentrated on the human body. However, Connor also explored the possibility of miracles involving the soul. Human beings, argued Connor, were composed of both matter and rational soul, which performed operations of mental reflection.<sup>105</sup> The human soul reflected on something when an external body impacted on the five senses. In other words, knowledge was derived from sense experience and 'it is not surprising if recently born children have no, or only very few, concepts of things'.<sup>106</sup> As a parallel to the suspension of the laws of motion relating to the body, Connor argued that there were two ways in which God could suspend the laws of motion governing the relationship between the senses and the soul: first, the soul could think without the impact of a sense experience; and, second, the soul would be unable to think even

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<sup>98</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 64. Connor pointed out that the suspension of motion is not the same as the suspension of the law of motion (p. 66).

<sup>99</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 58–159.

<sup>100</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 160–171; Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 315–16[II].

<sup>101</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 163, 167–8.

<sup>102</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 169.

<sup>103</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 170.

<sup>104</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 170–71.

<sup>105</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 194.

<sup>106</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 196.



when a sense experience was impressed on one of the five senses.<sup>107</sup> This opened up the possibility of miracles not accounted for in terms of the human body alone: knowledge of the 'nature and existence of things'; abilities of prediction; dream interpretation; perception of 'spectres, ghosts and other phantasms of shadow, though they do not truly affect the organs of the senses'; and inability to perceive a sensation despite interaction with an object, for example, a hand placed in boiling water.<sup>108</sup>

Connor's *Evangelium Medici* was evidently controversial. The Newtonian John Keill attacked the work in 1698, adducing it as evidence that 'our moderns are as wild, extravagant, and presumptuous as any of the ancients'.<sup>109</sup> In response, Connor offered a defensive English language account in an appendix to the first volume of his *History of Poland*.<sup>110</sup> It was published as a letter to 'his Reverend Friend Dean J.R.', tentatively identified by Davis Coakley as Dean John Richards of Ardfert in county Kerry.<sup>111</sup> The letter provided a convenient summary of his argument, but he also took the opportunity to reject accusations that he had encroached on theology. Connor insisted that he had not sought to prove that particular miracles had or had not happened; this was the responsibility of clergymen. Rather he had explained 'the mode and mechanism with which we may conceive how they might have been performed'.<sup>112</sup> He had undertaken his work with the advice of senior clergymen and had limited himself to aspects of the miraculous in which physicians were competent to judge, citing as an example the alleged miracle he had witnessed in Rome. Physicians versed in anatomy and chemistry, he maintained, were especially well placed to judge between natural and supernatural occurrences and to unmask trickery posing as the miraculous. As a further example, Connor cited Pope Innocent XII's imprisonment of the alchemist Giuseppe Francesco Borri at the Castel Sant'Angelo in August 1695, implicitly raising suspicions. Connor and his colleagues therefore offered protection against the Catholic trickery which, as Raymond Gillespie has pointed out, so worried seventeenth-century Protestants.<sup>113</sup> In the end, Connor, accepting that his theory may not have been well understood, 'resolv'd not to meddle any more with matters of this kind, but to apply myself entirely to the practice of physick'.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, p. 197.

<sup>108</sup> Connor, *Evangelium Medici*, pp. 200–201.

<sup>109</sup> John Keill, *An examination of Dr Burnet's theory of the earth* (2nd edn, Oxford and London: H. Clements and S. Harding, 1734), pp. 9–10.

<sup>110</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 311–22[II].

<sup>111</sup> Coakley, *Masters*, p. 22.

<sup>112</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 317[II].

<sup>113</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 317–322. Connor mistakenly wrote Clement X.

<sup>114</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 322.

## Conclusion

Dalitz and Stone concluded that 'it would seem that questions of real religious or national loyalty were of less importance to Connor than the need to gain the approval of the medical and social establishment, without which he could not have practised his profession so successfully'.<sup>115</sup> The establishment of a professional patronage network was clearly an important consideration for a recently arrived migrant. This may have induced Connor to publish his work on miracles in what must ultimately be deemed a misjudged attempt to overcome suspicions concerning his political and religious allegiances. Shortly after his arrival in England, Connor appears to have changed his name from O'Connor to Connor and conformed to the established church.<sup>116</sup> However, as a French-educated Irish Catholic, Connor was clearly vulnerable to allegations of disloyalty. In 1695, Sir William Trumbull, a government official who maintained a network of informers and who was instrumental in uncovering the Jacobite Fenwick plot, received information from Oxford that Connor had left the city when it was discovered that 'his work was to get Ireland out of the English hands'.<sup>117</sup> The same source later informed Trumbull that Connor was a French spy.<sup>118</sup> These allegations were not taken seriously, but suspicions relating to Connor's religious beliefs may have had more foundation. Connor fell ill in 1698. He requested in his will that a local Church of England minister, William Hayley, would preach a sermon at his funeral, so Hayley attended him two days before his death. Hayley assumed that part of his motivation was to overcome accusations of heterodoxy. Therefore he questioned Connor closely on his religious beliefs, and especially on miracles, to which he provided satisfactory answers. Hayley's sermon later recounted that 'when I discoursed him on the subject of that book of his, which occasion'd suspicion of his principles, he declared that he had no intention to prejudice religion thereby'.<sup>119</sup> Following a second discussion, Hayley concluded that Connor had 'sufficiently purged himself from the imputation of deism, socinianism or popery, I lookt on him as a true penitent member of the Church of England, and I gave him the

<sup>115</sup> Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 32.

<sup>116</sup> For discussion of his name change see Dalitz and Stone, 'Doctor Bernard Connor', 18; Blumberg and Blumberg, 'Bernard Connor', 350. Hayley's *Sermon* noted that he converted to the Church of England shortly after arrival in England (p. 28).

<sup>117</sup> Dr Robert George to Sir William Trumbull, 16 July 1695 in HMC, *Report on the manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire*, 1, part 2 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1924), pp. 508–9.

<sup>118</sup> George to Trumbull, 24 July 1695 in HMC, *Downshire*, p. 516. The same collection contains an anonymous letter addressed to William III reporting Connor's movements on the continent in 1694, though the letter is undated (*ibid.*, p. 603). Trumbull was well aware of an Irish dimension to Jacobite plotting (Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause, 1685–1766: a fatal attachment* (Dublin: FCP, 2002), pp. 91, 98).

<sup>119</sup> Hayley, *Sermon*, p. 30

sacrament'.<sup>120</sup> Hayley later discovered that Connor was also visited by an Irish Catholic priest, who administered the last rites with Connor's permission, though Hayley concluded that Connor's 'judgment was now quite decayed, and that he did not know what he did'.<sup>121</sup> Connor died on 30 October 1698.<sup>122</sup>

Was Hayley's conclusion correct? The evidence of *Evangelium Medici* is that Connor was operating within an orthodox Church of England theology of the miraculous. Connor accepted that the age of miracles had ended and his references were to biblical miracles.<sup>123</sup> He was pointedly critical of perceived 'Catholic' miracles.<sup>124</sup> *Evangelium Medici* was not a veiled deist tract and it seems more reasonable to conclude that it was one aspect of Connor's attempts to establish a medical reputation and practice in London by raising his social, professional and intellectual status in the face of suspicions aroused by his Irish Catholic background, his continental connections and his novel medical ideas. The choice of subject matter may have been dangerous, but it was also topical. In late 1695 John Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* had shocked readers. Toland and Connor were of a similar age and had been raised as Catholics in remote parts of Ireland (if Connor's origins lay in county Kerry). Connor must have been well aware of the sensational impact of Toland's work. Toland was a vocal character in the coffee houses of Oxford not long before Connor gave popular anatomy demonstrations in the city and both men knew James Tyrrell. In *Christianity not Mysterious* Toland rejected, as unintelligible, beliefs that were against or above reason. Connor's *Evangelium Medici* argued that miracles were intelligible within a mechanical philosophy of nature and the human body. As Connor noted: 'By this I hope to convince our scepticks, the Deists, who must give their assent, when they have the same evident reason to conceive the possibility, and consequently to believe the truth of such miraculous effects, that are authentically related, as they

<sup>120</sup> Hayley, *Sermon*, pp. 31–2.

<sup>121</sup> Hayley, *Sermon*, p. 33.

<sup>122</sup> His essay on the anatomy of muscles was published posthumously in John Browne's *Myographia Nova: or, a graphical description of all the muscles in the humane body, as they arise in dissection* (London, 1698). The work was first published in 1681. It was later demonstrated that Browne's text was plagiarised. Connor's essay first appeared in the 1698 edition. On Browne see K.F. Russell, 'John Browne, 1642–1702, a seventeenth-century surgeon, anatomist and plagiarist', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 33 (1959): 393–414, 503–75.

<sup>123</sup> Connor provided a list of biblical references for miracles discussed in his text (*Evangelium Medici*, pp. 205–8).

<sup>124</sup> Alexandra Walsham has argued recently that miracles played an important role in the counter-reformation missionary effort in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England; see 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation mission to England', *Historical Journal*, 46/4 (2003): 779–815.

have to conceive that straw can burn in a flaming fire'.<sup>125</sup> It is possible therefore to read *Evangelium Medici*, in part at least, as an early response to *Christianity not Mysterious*.

Bernard Connor was not a deist, but his work reflects an increasing scepticism concerning miracle claims at the end of the seventeenth century and illustrates how medicine played an important role in that process. Connor wished to chart a middle way between outright denial and simple credulousness. While he was a self-conscious free-thinker, keen to disseminate novel ideas, Connor believed that the most recent theories concerning the workings of the human body could be developed to explain and reinforce biblical miracles. In doing so, he presented a radical accommodation of the mechanical philosophy and the supernatural that reflected a significant tendency among mechanical philosophers in later seventeenth-century England.<sup>126</sup> However, Connor stands out on account of his Irish Catholic background. His explicit rejection of Aristotelianism in favour of an amalgam of medical and natural philosophical ideas illustrates how Irish Catholics educated in French universities could develop novel, even radical, ways of thinking.<sup>127</sup> While very different to John Toland, Bernard Connor also represents something of the early Irish Enlightenment in his appeal to 'experience and reason as our only guides'.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, his life and career suggest that scholars should pay closer attention to role of Irish Catholic doctors in the development of early modern intellectual as well as medical history.

<sup>125</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 314[II]. Connor made a very similar point at the start of *Evangelium Medici*: 'I have promised myself that those Pyrrhos and deists in our religion will be convinced and will at once give their assent at least to those miracles which the most reliable authors record, since they will realize that these same events occur no less clearly than the stubble burns when fire is applied' (Epistola, p. v). He also noted that unusual events which were mistakenly taken for miracles had 'given so great an occasion to scepticism and increase of Deism' (Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 314[II]).

<sup>126</sup> See Shaw, *Miracles*, pp. 74–97, 144–73. Peter Harrison has argued that a late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century group of Newtonians shifted the debate in a new direction: see 'Newtonian Science, miracles and the laws of nature', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1996): 531–53.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Liam Chambers, *Michael Moore, c.1639–1726: Provost of Trinity, Rector of Paris* (Dublin: FCP, 2005); Liam Chambers, 'Irish Catholics and Aristotelian scholastic philosophy in early modern France, c.1600–c.1750' in James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (eds), *The Irish contribution to European scholastic thought* (forthcoming 2009). While Connor was influenced by Cartesianism, he rejected some aspects of Descartes' thought. See Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 304[II].

<sup>128</sup> Connor, *History*, vol. 1, p. 310[III].