

TUCKER, JOSIAH (1712 - 1799), cleric and economist

Name: Josiah Tucker

Date of birth: 1712

Date of death: 1799

Gender: Male

Occupation: cleric and economist

Area of activity: Economics and Money; Religion

Authors: James Frederick Rees, Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born at Laugharne, Carmarthenshire. His father was a farmer and some time after his son's birth he inherited a small estate near Aberystwyth, where he settled. He sent his son to Ruthin grammar school and then to S. John's College, Oxford, where he matriculated in January 1733. There he proceeded to B.A. in 1736, M.A. in 1739, and took his D.D. in 1755. In 1737 he became curate of S. Stephens, and in 1739 rector of All Saints in Bristol.

In his earlier days at Bristol, Tucker was bitterly opposed to the Methodists; he published an attack on them in 1739, to which John Wesley replied in 1742. But during the 1756-63 war his views changed. The diary of the Bristol Moravian congregation, under the date 3 August 1759, records that **Howel Harris** (who, with his militia-men, was in Bristol at the time) had received a letter from Tucker (now a dean) pressing 'the religious people,' i.e. the Methodists, Moravians, and their like, 'to stand up against the invader.' And there is a letter by Tucker in the Trevecka collection - 2258, dated 12 August 1759.

On 13 July 1758 he was appointed dean of Gloucester. Tucker had taken a keen interest in political and economic questions at Bristol and he continued to publish books and pamphlets to express his views throughout his life. His *Elements of Commerce and Theory of Taxes*, 1755, is one of the earliest attempts to write a comprehensive treatise on economics based on general principles. In it he was moving towards a 'laissez faire' position as, for instance, in his condemnation of monopolies, either domestic or for the furtherance of foreign trade. But he was not persistent enough in his analysis and too apt to indulge in irrelevant digressions. In 1763 he exposed the folly of the idea of going to war as a means of expanding trade and prophesied that the conquest of Canada would weaken the bond of self-interest which bound the American Colonies to Great Britain. When difficulties arose with the Colonists he advocated complete political separation, contending that trade was based on mutual advantage and that Great Britain would gain rather than lose by recognising American independence. Tucker was not, however, an unqualified supporter of 'laissez faire.' He believed in state action to maintain population, e.g. by encouraging immigration and naturalization of foreigners, and in legislation to penalise idleness and promote production. His writings are often marred by the tendency to become unnecessarily controversial and diffuse. He died 4 November 1799.

Authors

Sir James Frederick Rees, (1883 - 1967)

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Walter E. Clark, *Josiah Tucker, Economist a Study in the History of Economics* (New York 1903) (New York, 1903) - this contains a very full list of Tucker's publications

R. L. Schuyler (ed.), *Josiah Tucker. A Selection from his Economic and Political Writings* (New York 1931) (New York, 1931)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Josiah Tucker](#)

Additional Links

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Published date: 1959

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