

RICHARD BALDWIN 1672-1758**by PETER BOYLE F.T.C.D**

Mr. Provost, Fellows and Scholars of the House, Members of the College, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the very outset I should like to say how much I appreciate the honour in being invited to deliver this discourse. Apart from a break of three years during the first world war, and one more break in 1956, there has been a Trinity Monday Discourse every year since 1895, and long may the tradition flourish, I say. So I should like to thank the Vice Provost and her committee most sincerely for their invitation to me to speak to you this morning. And I should like to thank the Provost for taking the chair. Now, any casual visitor to the Examination Hall across the square could not fail to notice the great marble memorial taking up so much of the right hand side of the hall. It shows a dying man being comforted by a female figure, with an angel hovering in attendance. If the visitor were perceptive, he or she might notice that one of the great portraits hanging on the wall of the Theatre depicts the same man in life as does the memorial in death. And if the visitor crossed the square and entered the Dining Hall his or her attention might very well be drawn to the great picture hanging in its splendid gilt frame directly above the pulpit. You, of course, will know that the marble memorial and the portraits all depict Richard Baldwin, who was Provost of this College from 1717 until his death in 1758. This year is the 250th anniversary of his death, and it is truly extraordinary that he has never before been celebrated by a Trinity Monday discourse. So I have taken it upon myself to repair the omission. And I'm actually feeling quite emotional about it for I celebrate my own personal anniversary today. Fifty Trinity Mondays ago, in 1958, I stood out there in the Front Square as a student and heard my name announced as a new Scholar. One of the great life experiences, and may I heartily congratulate all those whose names were read out earlier this morning.

Richard Baldwin ruled as Provost from 1717 to 1758, a span of no less than 41 years. He held office for longer than any other Provost either before or after him, and when I tell you that he was also the oldest ever Provost, you may begin to get a measure of this remarkable man. He was buried in the old College Chapel, and when this was pulled down to make way for the present Chapel in 1798, his remains were transferred to that little graveyard that you can still see tucked away in a corner between the Chapel and the Dining Hall. A simple slab marks the spot. Baldwin was a bachelor, in Holy Orders, as prescribed by the statutes, and his whole life was dedicated to the service of the College. And at the end he put his money where his mouth was, so to speak, for he bequeathed most of his substantial fortune to the College. So we know something about his death, and we know a lot about his life, which we shall come to in a moment. But his birth is shrouded in a great mystery. A mystery, moreover, that teased colleagues of his own generation, some of whom tried and none of whom succeeded in discovering anything at all about his origins, who he was and where he came from.

If you consult the College's book of admissions you will find that a Richard Baldwin entered Trinity on 29 April 1684 at the age of 16, that his father was Richard Baldwin, a gentleman of Athy, and that he was schooled at Kilkenny College. The records of Kilkenny College do indeed show a Richard Baldwin matriculating into Trinity in 1685 (although this is a year later than is given by the Trinity records). So was this our Provost? An old Kilkenny College boy from Athy? But then Jacky Barrett, the famous and eccentric Junior Dean who was renowned for his prodigious memory, remarked some years after Baldwin's death that he thought Baldwin came not from Athy, but from Dysart in County Laois. And indeed, while it may be a pure coincidence, I find that in the churchyard in Dysart there is a tombstone in memory of a David Baldwin, who died in 1834. So there were Baldwins in Dysart. Relations of the Provost, perhaps? But then again, out of the blue, the preacher at Baldwin's funeral, Dr. Lawson, whose marble bust you may see in the Long Room, said that the late Provost had been born in England, and had been brought over to Ireland as an infant. So was Baldwin after all an Englishman?

Well, in 1788 a Mr. Henry Baldwin of England said that he was, and so did a Mrs. Price of Worcester. Both were claiming to be descendents of the Provost's family, and they surfaced because they were contesting Baldwin's will. But since both stood to profit handsomely should their claim be true, their evidence must be treated with some caution. And in any event, they lost their case in 1820, when the courts decided in favour of the College. But while these unsuccessful hopefuls were unable to prove the English origins of Baldwin, a dramatic story emerged in 1801 in an English parish history. A Reverend Mr. Adamson had for 21 years in the late 1700's been curate of a village called Colne in Lancashire. And during his time there, Mr. Adamson said that amongst his parishioners were three old men, Mr. Banister, Mr. Dent and Mr. Clough. And these three old men told him that they had personally known two brothers of the Provost, called Nicholas and Henry. They said that Provost Richard Baldwin was a native of Colne, and had been a pupil at the Grammar School there. But in an accident he had killed one of the other boys at the school, and had had to flee, and at the age of 12 he found himself in Dublin, knowing nobody and with no money. He was crying hopelessly in a Dublin street when a kindly gentleman who owned a coffee shop found him, took him home, and gave him a job as a waiter. It so happened that the then Provost of Trinity, Dr. Huntingdon, needed a youth to look after his horse, and the coffee shop owner recommended the young Baldwin. Provost Huntingdon soon recognised that he had acquired not only a stable boy, but also a precocious highly intelligent youngster. So he educated him, and arranged for him to attend Trinity, where in due course he became Fellow, Vice-Provost and in 1717, Provost. The Rev. Adamson said that this tale was common knowledge at the time to everyone in Colne parish.

Now I find that the parish records of Colne do indeed show that many Baldwins lived there in the 1600's. Highly significant, however, the records include a Richard Baldwin, son of James, baptised in Colne church on 14 April 1672. Could this have been our Provost? The date fits. And what is more, I find also in the parish records that two babies, Nicholas and Henry, both with the same James as father, were also baptised in Colne church. Remember the three old men who said they knew Nicholas and Henry, brothers of Provost Richard. The names and dates fit. And if Baldwin did in fact arrive in Dublin

from Colne under these inauspicious circumstances, it would be easy to understand why he as Provost did not wish his humble origins to be widely known in the social circles of Georgian Dublin. After all, he had started life in Trinity looking after the Provost's horse.

But there is yet a further extraordinary development of the story, for on the 12th July 1892 the letters column of the London Daily Express included a letter from a Mr. J.R. Baldwin. His letter was prompted by the great 1892 Trinity tercentenary celebrations that he had read about, and he referred in his letter to Provost Baldwin as "his relative". He said that his father had given him an account of how Baldwin originally came from England to Dublin. And his story is essentially the same as the Colne one, except that this time the setting is in Yorkshire, where the young Provost to be was supposed to have attended Sedbergh Grammar School. But as in the earlier story he was supposed to have killed another boy accidentally, this time by a blow from a cricket ball, and fled to Dublin, where he was found by one of the Trinity Fellows and given a job cleaning boots and knives. The details differ from the Colne story, especially in location, but the similarities are striking. And far from giving the lie to both narratives, I think that the differences lend to both an air of truth. The Colne account is much the older of the two, and has independent evidence in the church records to back it up. The Sedberg story, on the other hand, is much more recent, and moreover Luce in his History of the College notes that the records of Sedberg Grammar School carry no reference to a Richard Baldwin. I suggest, therefore, that the Colne account is probably the more reliable, and that the later story in the Daily Express, while based on fact, had become distorted in the telling over the previous hundred years.

Finally, the village of Colne itself has no doubts about its claim to our Provost Baldwin, and here I am indebted to Fay Oldland of the North West Heritage Trust in Colne for help with the local history. The Annals of Colne, for example, published in 1878 by James Carr, list Provost Baldwin as one of the most illustrious old boys of Colne Grammar School, and state that he was born in 1672. And again, in a very detailed local village history published in 1929, Blakey records as a fact that Provost Baldwin of Trinity killed a fellow pupil in Colne school and had to flee to Dublin. And Dorothy Harrison in her 1988 history of Colne, makes the same claim.

So, taking all this material into account, I suggest that on balance it is most likely that Baldwin did come from Colne in Lancashire under the somewhat bizarre circumstances already outlined. And the dates just allow for the possibility that Provost Huntington put the boy in touch with Baldwins of Athy, from where he spent a brief sojourn in Kilkenny College, before entering Trinity at the age of 12 (there are many examples of boys as young as this entering Trinity). And finally, Baldwin kept to himself all these details of his humble origins for social reasons.

Wherever he came from, whatever his origins, we do know that Baldwin was an undergraduate in Trinity during the 1680's, that he became a Fellow in 1693, Senior Fellow in 1697, Vice-Provost in 1710, and ultimately Provost in 1717. His predecessor, the frequently absent Provost Pratt, had left much of the running of the College to his officers, and Baldwin as Vice-Provost was probably one of those who had kept the College going in the early 1700's. Nevertheless, in 1717 when he took over as Provost the College was in pretty poor shape. In marked contrast, when he died in 1758 he handed over a thriving institution to his successor, Provost Andrews.

There were two main driving forces in Baldwin's life. Firstly, he was genuinely devoted to the College, of that there is no doubt. Secondly, he was a passionate Whig, and his dedicated ardour for the Whig cause, was equaled only by his implacable hatred of the Tory. But while his motives were never questioned, his methods of running the College certainly were. A strict disciplinarian, he expected unquestioning obedience from those over whom he ruled. He could brook no political opinions other than his own, especially if he detected a Tory tinge in them. His style was confrontational, his bearing arrogant, and he was extremely unpopular in College. His severe, abrasive and unsympathetic manner, and his qualities of strictness, intolerance, and sheer ruthlessness meant that he had many enemies. He found himself embroiled in fierce controversies, and as often as not he was totally at logger heads with the Fellows. All this may sound very negative, but on the other hand, he did have the dignified bearing and gravitas that befitted his high office, everything he did was for what he believed was for the good of the College, and although he was never loved, he was widely respected. In holy orders and unmarried, he lived an austere and frugal bachelor life in College, and whether from genuine

piety or from the desire to set a good example, he was to be found at chapel service twice a day, at ten in the morning and four in the afternoon.

Baldwin needed to be tough if he were to control the desperately unruly College that he took over in 1717. And in order to understand the difficulties faced by the new Provost we must now spend a little while attempting to get a flavour of what it was like in College in those days. One major problem was the disorderly Jacobite faction amongst the students. For example, in 1708 a graduate called Edward Forbes had been deprived of his degrees for comparing King William with a notorious highwayman who had been hanged in Stephen's Green. And in 1713, after an incident in which the King had fallen from his horse and been injured, a student called Theodore Barlow had proposed a toast "to the memory of the horse from which King William was thrown" (for which exercise in free speech he found himself expelled from the College). When Baldwin became Provost in 1717, 27 years had passed since William had triumphed at the Battle of the Boyne, and Provosts and Fellows of Trinity had committed themselves to the new regime firstly under William and Mary, then under Queen Anne and now with Baldwin under George I. But many students still had strong Jacobite sympathies, so when Baldwin took over he found a student body strongly indisposed to recognise authority, and for the first thirty years of his rule he fought ceaselessly to impose a rigid discipline on the College.

We have no private records of Baldwin, no letters, no diaries, so that it is difficult to get as it were inside the man and discover what he really thought. We can only judge him by his public actions in the context of the conditions prevailing in his day, so that in order to understand Baldwin we must have some idea of what these conditions were. I have already mentioned that one of major problems faced by Baldwin when he took over as Provost was the unruly and rebellious humour of the students, and some of the incidents with which he had to deal were extremely serious. In 1734, for example, after the Junior Dean had publicly reprimanded a student in the Hall, all hell broke loose. The luckless Dean was literally stoned out of the Hall, a gang of students attacked his rooms and completely destroyed everything in them, the mob then rampaged through College and tried to set the College gates on fire. The Provost himself received a threatening letter. There was actually a nice

follow-up touch here, for the Board offered a reward for information on the perpetrators. But the enterprising students cheekily offered a higher reward for any informer, dead or alive, who tried to claim the Board's reward.

The students showed mighty little respect for those put in authority over them, and this is well illustrated by the case of a student called Annesley, who had entertained some friends in his rooms in College - entertained them too well and too long, indeed, for when late at night the company went to go home they found the gates of the College locked against them. And the Provost had the keys. The students brazenly knocked on the Provost's door, and when the servant opened up, they threatened to break open the gates if he didn't give them the keys. But the man told them that the keys were with the Provost, who was now fast asleep in bed. So the students kicked up such a racket that they wakened the Provost. Quite understandably, Baldwin was highly annoyed. The next day he summoned Annesley to the Provost's House and demanded a public confession of his guilt in the Hall. But Annesley, on leaving the Provost's house, instead of making for the Hall to show his penitence, donned his hat in front of the Provost (a calculated insult) and walked off in the opposite direction. And he sort of got away with it. Baldwin expelled him, but Annesley was a relation of Lord Anglesea, and he was reinstated later on.

Baldwin's problems were not confined to unruly students within the College. Events often spilled over into the town outside the walls. A really serious riot occurred in 1747, when a Scholar, not having paid his bills, was arrested on College premises by a bailiff and lodged in the Marshalsea Prison. The students were incensed, they scoured the city, found the bailiff, kidnapped him, and brought him back to the College pump, where, to use a modern expression, they waterboarded him and nearly drowned him. Then they ran amok through the town and attacked the prison. Two persons were killed in the riot. Baldwin had to deal with all this, and in the subsequent enquiry I note as an aside that one of the students reprimanded by the Board was Oliver Goldsmith. The famous College pump, incidentally, was traditionally used by the students for dispensing summary justice, and the story is told how Goldsmith's tutor, a Fellow called Theaker Wilder, was passing the pump one day when a bailiff was suffering the customary treatment. "Gentlemen,

gentlemen” said Wilder “for the love of God, don’t be so cruel as to nail his ears to the pump”. Taking the hint (for that’s what it was), the students promptly procured a hammer and nails, and, with a tenpenny nail pegged an ear of the miserable man to the pump.

Baldwin as head of the College acted *in loco parentis* in a very real way. In the eighteenth century, students often entered College as early as 12-16 years old, and Baldwin must have been sorely tried when his students got drawn into the fierce street battles that were commonplace in Dublin at that time, especially between two groups of workers, the Tailors and Weavers on the one hand, known as the Liberty Boys, and the Butchers on the other. Up to 1000 men sometimes engaged in vicious street fighting that could last the whole day. On one occasion, the Butchers captured some Trinity students and it was reported back that the captive students had been hung up by their jaws on meat hooks, as had happened on an earlier occasion when the Butchers had captured a few of the Liberty Boys. When a rescue party arrived the unfortunate students were indeed hanging off meat hooks. But it turned out, however, that in a moment of mercy they had been suspended not by their jaws but by their belts.

This was the sort of riotous behaviour faced by Baldwin when he became Provost. And sometimes he had even to face down the city authorities on behalf of his students. There was an incident in which some students had sought refuge in College after a fight with some of the townsmen and the Lord Mayor demanded their arrest. But Baldwin refused, “having been of the opinion that the young men were perfectly right, that any insult had first been offered to them”. When the Mayor offered to give bail to the students, Baldwin retorted “then I propose myself as bail for them all”. The students were so grateful that they had a whip round and collected enough money to commission a portrait of Baldwin. This is the great portrait that hangs today in the College Dining Hall above the pulpit.

It is also clear that Baldwin was a man of considerable personal physical courage. Once when the students were processing *en bloc* to St. Patrick’s Cathedral on a Sunday in Lent, they were attacked by the Butcher Boys. Baldwin was at the head of the procession, and the students tried to protect him by keeping him in the background. But the Provost ran out in front of them

shouting "Follow me, my lads, and I'll head you! I am appointed by your parents and friends to take care of you, and I'll fight for you till I die!" Remaining at the head of his students, by sheer force of personality the Provost subdued the attack. In an account of this incident, a scholar called Skelton commented that Baldwin was "as brave as a lion".

But of all these riotous events, the most serious, and the one that caused Baldwin most grief, was the murder of the Junior Dean, Dr. Edward Forde. In all the history of the College he was the only Fellow to have been murdered, although in 1663 a Fellow called Leckey was executed for plotting against Charles II, and in 1695 Provost George Brown was killed when he was hit on the head by a brickbat during a student riot. Dr. Forde the Junior Dean was an oppressive disciplinarian, pigheaded and stubborn, and thoroughly disliked by the students. But he did not deserve to die. This was in 1734. He lived in the Rubrics, in an upper floor of No. 25, and he slept with a loaded gun by his side, for previously he had been threatened and attacked. Asleep in bed one night, he was awakened by stones being thrown at his windows (on the side of the Rubrics now facing the New Square). In a fit of rage he grabbed his gun, fired on the mob of students below, wounded one, and went back to bed. But the students were incensed. They dispersed, but returned immediately armed with a gun. Ford bravely, or foolishly, appeared at his window in his nightdress, a shot rang out and he fell back mortally wounded. After two hours of agony, he died. The Board under Baldwin acted promptly, and five students, namely Messrs. Cotter, Crosby, Scholes, Davis, and curiously Boyle, stood trial for murder. In the event they were all acquitted, but instead of being congratulated for its firm action, the Board was denounced. Mothers, instead of thanking Baldwin for his efforts to keep good order, blamed him for allowing their sons to be exposed to untold dangers in the College. They accused the Board of a cruel persecution against the sons of gentlemen, and referred to the incident as but a "frolick", in which the students merely wanted to break a man's window, though admitting that "it chanced indeed to end in his death". The Fellows were the subjects of unprecedented abuse. Everything they said or did had a wrong turn given to it. Numberless false stories about them were spread abroad. One noble Lord declared that "a Fellow's blood did not deserve an inquisition which might detain a man one

day from his ordinary business”. Baldwin and the Board were extremely upset. A full enquiry by the Visitors found entirely in their favour, but nobody else accepted the Visitors’ version of affairs. Eventually, however, things quietened down, and College returned to normal. As for poor murdered Edward Ford. For many years there used to be stories of his gowned and bewigged ghost walking at dusk along by the Rubrics, the site of his murder. Dr. McDowell published a detailed account of this whole incident in 1950.

But Baldwin’s problems were not only with his students. When he took over as Provost, discipline amongst the Fellows was just as lax as that amongst the students. We are told that the lecturers didn’t lecture, and that the Fellows neither prayed in Chapel nor dined in Hall. And Baldwin’s efforts towards reform led him to bitter long drawn out conflicts with the Fellows. He was a man of very strong opinions, uncompromising in his determination to get his own way, and he had absolutely no scruples as to how he went about getting it. A striking example of the lengths to which Baldwin was prepared to go arose in 1739 when the College had to elect an MP to represent it in Parliament. The two candidates were Mr. Philip Tisdall (whose portrait hangs in the Common Room) and Mr. Alexander McAulay, and Baldwin blatantly rigged the election in favour of McAulay. The Scholars had a vote in this election, and in a move of breathtaking audacity Baldwin arranged for some of his supporters who were graduates to enter the annual Scholarship examination. Being already graduates, these obviously had an enormous advantage over the undergraduate candidates, and they won all the scholarships. So the Scholars were now packed with Baldwin’s men, who voted for McAulay. There was a fierce row with the Senior Fellows, but protest as they might, there was nothing in the Statutes against a graduate entering for Scholarship, although by ancient usage, of course, only undergraduates entered for the examination. One of the Senior Fellows called Dr. Hughes, was a man “of violent passions and no discretion”, and it would be a shame for me not to give you verbatim what he said at a wine party in number 35. Hughes said “that the Provost was the greatest tyrant and the most worthless wretch that ever held power, always using it to serve the vilest ends, and to promote good-for-nothing rascals to the undoing of the College: that the Provost was a prejudiced villain; that he himself [Hughes] since the first day he was made a Fellow had opposed the Provost, and was

determined to do so till his last day; that whoever would pretend to the name of an honest man, must ever act in opposition to that infamous villain, that for his [Hughes] part his greatest virtue consisted in his ever detesting and opposing that iniquitous scoundrel; and that everyone should show his scorn and contempt of him". Marvellous stuff! What a shame we never hear such colorful language in College politics today.

And when on the same issue another Fellow called John Foster took a more moderate line, Hughes turned on him and called him a Judas Iscariot and an old mean-spirited wretch. Unfortunately for Hughes, as it turned out, this Foster was "a man of great learning and worth, but of a very warm temper" and was "irritated to a degree of frenzy by this abuse". He reported Hughes' remarks to the Provost, and on 22 November 1739 Hughes appeared before Baldwin, refused to apologise, and was sacked under Chapter 23 of the Statutes as a "pestilent member" of the College. So Hughes paid dearly for his outspokenness. He appealed to the Visitors and lost. He appealed to the Prince of Wales and lost again, and he ended up as a parish clergyman. For the record, Baldwin's man McAulay did win the election, but there was a successful appeal to the House of Commons and he was obliged to hand over his seat to Tisdal.

This sort of thing seemed to go on all the time. In the Long Room you will see a marble bust of a distinguished Fellow called Delaney, who was a friend of Swift. Delaney was so irritated with the Provost's behaviour that he actually preached a sermon against him in the College Chapel. Baldwin was outraged, and demanded an apology to be made in public in the College Hall. Delaney refused, and asked his friend Lord Cartaret, the Viceroy, to intervene. The noble Lord sent a threatening message "Tell the Provost that his house is made of glass and that I have a stone in my sleeve." To which the redoubtable Baldwin replied "Tell His Excellency that if Dr. Delaney does not beg my pardon in the College Hall tomorrow, I will expel him there at 12 o'clock". Delaney surrendered.

Perhaps the most enduring legacy left to us by Provost Baldwin was the construction of some of the major buildings that we still have. Trinity as we know it today began to take shape under him. The great library had been started under Provost Pratt in 1712 but it was finished in 1724 when Baldwin

was Provost. And the great West Front of College was started under Baldwin in the 1750's, though sadly it was not completed until 1759, the year after his death. Another familiar building dating from Baldwin's time is the Printing House that stands like a little Greek temple at a corner of the New Square. It was opened in 1734, and was a gift from Bishop Stearne of Clogher. It is a little gem of a building, and was designed by Richard Cassels, who as you know built many famous buildings such as Leinster House, Carton House, Powerscourt House, and the Rotunda Hospital. Curiously, Cassels' other efforts in College were much less successful. In 1740 he built an imposing bell tower, standing roughly where the present Campanile is. But the bell was too heavy for it and the tower had to be taken down again in 1791. This was the great bell that now hangs in the present Campanile. Worse still, in 1744 Cassels' was building a new College Dining Hall, but it partly blew down in a storm while it was being built, and when it was eventually finished it had to be demolished again within 15 years because the foundations collapsed. The records show that Mr. Plummer the bricklayer was sacked.

Academically, I have to say that Baldwin added no lustre to the College, for quite simply, he wrote nothing. Nor did he inspire his colleagues to any frenzy of publishing activity. On the contrary, McDowell and Webb made the damning observation that from 1722 to 1753 inclusive there was no trace of even a single publication written by anybody who was at the time a Fellow. Trinity became known as "the silent sister". But on the other hand, under Baldwin well structured undergraduate courses began to emerge. A new professorship in Divinity was founded with money from Archbishop King. The Erasmus Smith Foundation, which seemed to have lots of money to spare after it had founded its schools, paid for the establishment of two new chairs, one in oratory and history, and the second in natural and experimental philosophy (which meant mechanics and physics). This chair survives today, and explains the quaint title that we give to our professor of physics – professor of natural and experimental philosophy.

Baldwin is a good candidate for being the most colorful Provost we have had in the long history of the College. In some ways he was undoubtedly a tyrant. Dixon called him "harsh, imperious, often unjust". Relentless in the pursuit of what he wanted, he had little sympathy with or understanding of

those who opposed him, and as we have seen, he used every trick in the book to get his way. But while he fought constantly with his Fellows, he was nevertheless widely respected by his contemporaries, and even his enemies (and they were many) never charged him with using his high position for personal gain. We have an idea of what he looked like from his portraits. Mahaffy noted that the portraits “represent a stupid and expressionless face, suggesting severity without natural dignity of good breeding”. But this is less than fair and the so-called “lack of natural dignity of good breeding” probably tells as much about the snobbishness of Mahaffy as about the obscure origins of Baldwin. Luce, in contrast, commented that the portrait of Baldwin in the Dining Hall shows “a stern calm face, with strongly marked features”. This, I think, is a fairer assessment. It is indeed not an attractive face, nor one suggesting any warmth of character, but it is certainly not stupid and expressionless.

As I’ve already said, when we come to assess the character of Baldwin the man, what was he really like inside and what did he really think, the difficulty is that we have no collection of personal letters, no private diaries. But writing some 20-30 years after Baldwin had died, here is what Hely Hutchinson said. Hutchinson was Provost from 1774 to 1794, and would have been a student at Trinity under Baldwin. “His undaunted resolution, great strength of mind, superior sagacity, and constant application to his duty were universally acknowledged. He was considered as an eminent divine, an excellent classical scholar, and though all his life sequestered in College he was a man of elegant manners and of polished and dignified address. He was a formidable enemy, and a warm and constant friend, but, without many powers of obliging, was more feared than loved, a zealous Whig. He was determined to establish his own political principles in the Society where he presided and the good effects of his political principles were his banishing from that Society every trace of Toryism. Of the purity of his domestic life suspicions were entertained, which occasioned several of the academic disturbances in his time. From his great regularity, constant assiduity, and the long continuance of his administration this university acquired a more settled form than at any period.

Baldwin lived a frugal life style, and was not a man to be seduced by gracious living of any kind. He did not indulge in the pleasures of the table. But, dare I ask, did he indulge in a few pleasures of the flesh? Let me entertain you for a moment at Baldwin's expense. Remember that intriguing line just quoted from Hely Hutchinson when he wrote about Baldwin "of the purity of his domestic life suspicions were entertained". And a little later in 1845 Taylor wrote about Baldwin. "It is true he never married, but he, perhaps, dispenses as much of his wealth in amusements as would have supported a family in a becoming style". We have no further details of what was meant by these curious statements. But I do find a whisper of a scandal in some eighteenth century doggerel verse purporting to be "A letter from a Cobbler in Patrick Street to the Provost of TCD". Why indeed should Dicky not have his Dolly?

*The Provost always preaches once a Year
In Patrick's Church, and I go, him to hear.
Nay that he do's to my own knowledge,
But never preaches in the College
And they, that understand him, say, in troth
He speaks as well, as any of the Cloth:
And so he might, or speak at random;
For I cou'd never understand 'im.*

*In Charity the Provost never lacked,
He fed the Hungry, and he cloth'd the Naked
And prithe, where's the mighty harm,
If Dolly keeps her Master warm:
In this she shews her Gratitude and Will,
Since one good Turn, deserves another still:
Captain Macheath must have his Polly,
Why shou'd not Dicky have his Dolly?*

And then I find another eighteenth century satirical pamphlet entitled "The Colledge Opera". The names in it appear as B---- and D----ly, but these can only, I suggest, refer to Baldwin and Dolly. The verse goes:

*Dear Baldwin cease supine to loll,
In modest lap of marry'd Doll,
Nor gazing on her desp'rate face,
Forget the duties of thy place;
Think what a noble pow'r is thine!
But think was this the first design,
That you, who ought the rest to rule,
Should be your self, chaste Dolly's fool.*

So who was this intriguing married, chaste Dolly, in whose lap Baldwin lolled? Tantalisingly, we just don't know.

Of the seven provosts who immediately preceded Baldwin, no less than five of them became bishops in the Church of Ireland. Why then was Baldwin overlooked? It was a much discussed anomaly. Taylor noted sardonically that "it astonished everyone that he could not get out of the Provostship, as much as it did to know how he got into it". A more complimentary assessment was that Baldwin was left where he was as Provost because no better man could be found to fill the post. Or perhaps, who knows, it may even had something to do with Dolly?

Baldwin became Provost in 1717. He died, still Provost, on 30 September 1758, and as we have seen was buried in the College, so that he ruled for 41 years – the longest reign of any Provost in the history of the College. He was 86 years old when he died – the oldest Provost in the history of the College. He was possibly the most conniving and ruthless Provost in the history of the College (though the competition here was tough). I note that he left a greater personal fortune to the College than any other Provost, and he is the only Provost to have had a major monumental sculpture erected in his honour. But the whole of his extraordinarily long career was spent in the service of Trinity, to which he was genuinely devoted, and he can take credit for putting Trinity on the road to its becoming the great University of Dublin that was to emerge later on. So I put it to you, ladies and gentlemen, that Provost Richard Baldwin thoroughly deserves to be commemorated in a Trinity Monday discourse, and on the 250th anniversary of his death, I have attempted in some small way to do justice to this remarkable man.