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Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context

Edited by

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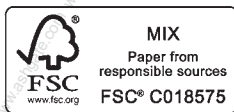
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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Burgess, 'Matter of Context'	G. Burgess, 'A Matter of Context: "Radicalism" and the English Revolution', in M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino (eds), <i>Cromohs Virtual Seminars. Recent historiographical trends of the British Studies (17th–18th Centuries)</i> , 2006–2007: 2, < http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/burgess_radicalism.html >
Burgess, 'Introduction'	G. Burgess, 'Introduction', in G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), <i>English Radicalism, 1550–1850</i> (Cambridge, 2007)
Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English revolution'	G. Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English revolution', in G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), <i>English Radicalism, 1550–1850</i> (Cambridge, 2007)
CC	Sir Roger Twysden, <i>Certaine Considerations Upon the Government of England</i> , ed. J.M. Kemble (Camden Society, 45, 1849)
CCC	<i>Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding</i> , ed. M.A.E. Green (London, 1889–93)
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CJ	<i>Commons Journal</i>
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
CL	Sir Roger Twysden, <i>The Commoners Liberty: or the English-Mans Birth-Right</i> ([14 September] 1648)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
HJ	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary National Biography</i>
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
SCJ	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
SUL, HP	Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers
TN	'Sir Roger Twysden's Narrative', <i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i> , 1–4 (1858–61)
TNA	The National Archives, London
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>

WMQ
YAS

William and Mary Quarterly
Yorkshire Archaeological Society

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Introduction

Reappraising Early Modern Radicals and Radicalisms

Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan

‘The errors of Definitions multiply themselves, according as the reckoning proceeds; and lead men into absurdities, which at last they see, but cannot avoyd, without reckoning anew from the beginning; in which lyes the foundation of their errors’

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), p. 15

The Meaning of Words and the Problem of Anachronism

Radical was originally a word relating to a root or roots which, by the early modern period, was used particularly in philosophy, astrology and philology. Hence radical moisture (‘humidum radicale’) was understood to be the ‘natural moysture’ or ‘fundamental juyce of the body, whereby the natural heat is nourished and preserved, as the flame in a Lamp is preserved by oyle’. In astrology a radical question was one put forward when ‘the Lord of the ascendent, and Lord of the hour are of one nature and triplicitie’. Similarly, philologists divided the letters that made up Hebrew words into root and functional letters, the radical or radix being the essential and permanent part of the word form. By extension, radical also signified origin and hence fundamental qualities inherent in the nature or essence of a person or thing.¹ As Conal Condren has observed, however, radical only became a political term associated with thorough or far-reaching political and social reform towards the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, it was apparently not until autumn 1819 – shortly before Lord Byron thought radical might mean uprooting – that ‘radicalism’ was coined by Jeremy Bentham. Nor was it a univocal word for within a decade radicalism meant not only the political views characteristic of radicals but thoroughness of method as well. Condren’s point was that historians aim to know the past as it really was, whereas anachronism manifestly ‘specifies the past as it really wasn’t’. Accordingly, he stressed that ‘we

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*; I. Lancashire (ed.), *LEME: Lexicons of Early Modern English*, <http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/>.

need to be particularly fastidious about our interpretive vocabulary'.² Jonathan Clark goes further, regarding radicalism as an early nineteenth-century neologism applicable to 'a fusion of universal suffrage, Ricardian economics and programmatic atheism'.³ As Glen Burgess notes in a recent debate on radicalism and the English Revolution, the work of both Condren and Clark may be characterised as a sceptical or nominalist approach: radicalism did not exist until it was named.⁴

This is not something we agree with. If we remove anachronisms from our discourses we should be consistent – though to be fair to Condren he seems primarily and almost invariably concerned with purging the language historians use to explain early modern politics.⁵ By this reasoning, if one were to write about the world depicted in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, using words that came into the English language after 1400 would be out of the question. Likewise, in discussing seventeenth-century England we could not speak of 'angelology' (unrecorded before 1753), 'anti-Semitism' (unrecorded before 1882), a 'homosexual' (unrecorded before 1892), a 'Neoplatonist' (unrecorded before 1837), 'numerology' (unrecorded before 1907), a 'pantheist' (unrecorded before 1705), a 'vegetarian' (unrecorded before 1839) or, significantly, the 'English Revolution' (popularised during the 1820s).⁶ The period's neologisms such as Milton's 'pandemonium' would only complicate matters. It seems that in their desire to expurgate anachronism from our texts nominalists would have us ignore the lesson of Jorge Luis Borges's short story 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*': we cannot become early moderns bereft of hindsight; living imitations of our subjects, capable of replicating their language and forgetting all that we know about the exceedingly complex events that followed their deaths. Yet that is not to say, as Condren highlighted with his caveat against bad practice, that radical and its -ism(s) are not problematic terms.

Whatever else may be said about the linguistic turn, the merits and deficiencies of post-structuralism, and its impact on historical and literary studies, it is an

² Jeremy Bentham, 'Radical Reform Bill' and 'Radicalism not dangerous', in J. Bowring (ed.), *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (11 vols, Edinburgh, 1838–43), 3, pp. 559, 560, 599; C. Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates in early modern political thought: a case of Sandwich Islands syndrome', *History of Political Thought*, 10 (1989): pp. 526–33; C. Condren, *The Politics of Language in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 155–8.

³ J.C.D. Clark, 'Religion and the origins of radicalism in nineteenth-century Britain', in G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 241.

⁴ Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 2; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 8–9; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English Revolution', p. 63.

⁵ C. Condren, 'Afterword: Radicalism Revisited', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 311–13; cf. J. Holstun, *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London and New York, 2002), pp. 22–4.

⁶ *OED*.

inescapable conclusion that words are signifiers and what they signify can only be interpreted in relation to both the signified and other signifiers. Accordingly, words depend upon each other to provide meaning – whether they are present or missing in texts. As context shifts so can the sense of a word. Furthermore, because the meaning of certain English words has changed over time, something that as historians and literary scholars we are (or should be) attuned to, it is worth comparing the present political, social, philosophical and cultural meaning of radical with contemporary alternatives.

In an exploration of late Stuart radicals and their manifestos, Richard Greaves repeated a case – which had its trenchant critics – for the usefulness of the anachronistic term radical in discussing various groups of an otherwise disparate nature (Baptists, Covenanters, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, rebels and republicans). Nor, as he pointed out, was ‘the contemporary lexicon... lacking in words and phrases’ to portray those in opposition to the post-Restoration Stuart regimes or the Church of England. Thus terms with unmistakable pejorative connotations were bandied about: the disaffected, ill-affected and fanatics; factious, seditious, restless and rebellious kind of people; and disloyal dissenters, nonconformists and sectaries.⁷ The same holds true for the English Revolution and earlier still in the seventeenth century. Hence there was a profusion of generally derogatory and often new words applied to both religious communities and political movements – even when these groups lacked an identifiable and cohesive leadership capable of imposing internal discipline and adherence to a unified set of agreed principles. To take one set of examples, there were those distinguished by their real or attributed activities: Diggers, Dippers, Levellers, Quakers, Ranters and Seekers. Diggers were described as ‘new fangled’, ‘distracted, crack brained’, ‘disorderly and tumultuous sort of people’.⁸ Dippers or Anabaptists were blasphemous, confused, confuted or erring in doctrine. Levellers were accused of seeking to abolish social distinctions and private ownership of property, of levelling men’s estates and introducing anarchy. They were also defamed as atheists, devils, mutineers, rebels and villains. Quakers were mocked for trembling before the secular authority of magistrates, disparaging accounts of their assemblies conveying chaotic scenes of ecstatic posturing attributed to either diabolic pacts or epilepsy. Ranters – those who declaimed vehemently – were associated with revelling, roaring, drinking, whoring, swearing and all manner of wickedness. And Seekers or Expecters were likened to libertines who had scandalously defected from the bosom of the Church.

None of this is to suggest that these pejorative contemporary words, commonly employed in a polemical context, must necessarily be synonymous with what we now call radicalism. After all, anti-Catholic stereotypes and pamphlets targeting

⁷ R.L. Greaves, ‘“That Kind of People”: Late Stuart Radicals and their Manifestoes, a Functional Approach’, in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 87–94.

⁸ A. Hessayon, ‘Restoring the Garden of Eden in England’s Green and Pleasant Land: The Diggers and the Fruits of the Earth’, *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 2, no. 2 (2008): p. 2.

bishops, barbarous, bloodthirsty, cruel and cussing Cavaliers, as well as evil counsellors remind us of the ubiquity of propaganda. It does, however, alert us to the fact that just because certain signifiers did not exist during the seventeenth century it does not necessarily follow that the phenomena were also absent.⁹ Indeed, effacing the term radical from our analyses does not seem a practicable solution. In its absence there would be silence, while finding a universally agreed substitute would be equally problematic. Moreover, for more than a century – at least since George Gooch's pioneering *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1898) – and especially since the 1930s, radical and radicalism have been used with ever increasing regularity to ascribe particular characteristics to individuals and the ideas they espoused during our period.¹⁰ That is long enough for them to have become part of the discourse even if the various and occasionally conflicting ways in which scholars have used the words to talk about the past have yet to be fully documented. And it is a point conceded by Burgess who acknowledges, despite his nominalist leanings, that 'doing without the category of radicalism' is a forlorn hope.¹¹

As for how we should understand radical and radicalism, we would do well both to provide a brief history of usage (which has not been attempted before), and to take Hobbes's advice (cited above) that anyone aspiring to true knowledge must examine the definitions of their predecessors – and if necessary either correct or at least critique them. Thus to begin with the first issue of a journal called *The Radical* (1831), a Radical must prescribe not a partial or moderate dose of political medicine but radical treatment for the ills afflicting the body politic:

which will go to the *radix*, or root of the national disease. He will physic, purge, bleed, – he will ERADICATE, – he will be a RADICAL.

This resonates with John Stuart Mill's 1836 depiction of Philosophic Radicalism as:

A radicalism ... which is only to be called radicalism inasmuch as it does not palter nor compromise with evils, but cuts at their roots.¹²

⁹ Cf. C. Hill, *The Experience of Defeat. Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London, 1984), p. 26; N. McDowell, 'Writing the Literary and Cultural History of Radicalism in the English Revolution', in Caricchio and Tarantino (eds) *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/mcdowell.html>; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 13–14.

¹⁰ G. Gooch, *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1898), pp. 123–38, 150, 157.

¹¹ Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 4; cf. T. Cooper, 'Reassessing the Radicals', *HJ*, 50 (2007): pp. 247–52.

¹² Quoted in Clark, 'Religion and origins of radicalism', p. 267; John Stuart Mill, quoted in F. Rosen, 'Jeremy Bentham's Radicalism', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds),

In the same vein, Karl Marx maintained that ‘to be radical is to grasp the root of the matter’, though according to Marx, for man, that radix was man himself.¹³ The author and politician John Mackinnon Robertson likewise declared that ‘radicalism means going to the *root* of things in political action’, to the real causes of social unrest.¹⁴ While these etymologically faithful definitions remained fairly constant there was also a moderating impulse, the expectation that radicalism’s objective was not extirpation, but pruning and renewal:

Radicalism is not tearing things up by the roots, but getting down to the roots of things and planting institutions anew on just principles.¹⁵

Added to this was the belief that nineteenth-century English political Radicals were ‘pioneers of progress ... alive to the necessities of the future’.¹⁶ This led to what Condren has rightly – at least in an early modern context – recognised as a ‘whole penumbra of unstable associations’ of the term radical with ‘democratic, laudable, edifying, progressive and worthy’.¹⁷

Turning to exponents from other disciplines, since they tended to precede historians in their theorising about rather than application of the term, the American philosopher Horace Kallen defined radicalism in the 1930s as:

a distinct philosophy and program of social change looking toward systematic destruction of what is hated, and its replacement by an art, a faith, a science or a society logically demonstrated as true and good and beautiful and just.¹⁸

Drawing on Max Weber’s work, the sociologist Egon Bittner updated this view, explaining that radicalism’s function was to transform a normal, common-sense outlook into a radical, doctrinaire attitude that underpinned conduct. Furthermore, in Bittner’s opinion, ensuring an individual’s ideological purity and continued membership in an organised radical movement was achieved by the group’s

English Radicalism, p. 218.

¹³ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (1844), introduction <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>>; N. Rotenstreich, ‘On Radicalism’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 4 (1974): pp. 171, 172–5.

¹⁴ J.M. Robertson, *Practical Radicalism* (London, 1892), p. 1.

¹⁵ P. Brooks, quoted in J.E. Shea, ‘Radicalism and Reform’, *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association*, 3 (1906): p. 167.

¹⁶ The Functions of Radicalism (London, 1879), p. 5; cf. C. Kent, *The English Radicals, an Historical Sketch* (London, 1899), p. 4.

¹⁷ Condren, *Politics of Language*, pp. 144, 149; cf. Burgess, ‘Radicalism and English Revolution’, p. 64.

¹⁸ H. Kallen, ‘Radicalism’, in E. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (15 vols, New York, 1930–34), 13, pp. 51–4.

charismatic leadership employing a combination of mystification, gratification, discipline, isolation, deception and manipulation.¹⁹ More recently, radicalism has been understood variously as ‘a system of thought that seeks to tear down old institutions and reconstruct new ones’, and as ‘any stance, practical, intellectual, or both, that goes to the root of existing practices, beliefs, or values’. In addition, ‘since the term is relative, any fundamental criticism of or assault on existing practices can be reasonably termed radical’. Indeed:

Radicalism is, like conservatism, a relationship term not a content term, and its particular character is, therefore, dependent on the historical circumstances in which it is used.²⁰

The sociologist Dennis Wrong has also emphasised the connection between radicalism and historical circumstances, arguing that it ‘lacks any specific substantive content’ and is therefore more indicative of disposition: an ‘extreme, absolute, uncompromising commitment’. Given its ‘abstract and formal nature’ as well as its changeable ideological characteristics that are inextricably bound up with the passage of major historical events, the meaning of radicalism is ‘likely always to be relative and context-bound’.²¹

These philosophical and sociological perspectives offer an interesting and under-utilised sidelight on comparable concerns in the field of early modern studies. For sixteenth-century Europe the most important contribution was George Huntston Williams’s distinction, developed in the late 1950s, between the ‘Magisterial Reformation’ and a ‘Radical Reformation’. The latter was ‘a loosely interrelated congeries of reformations and restitutions’ which grouped together the various types of Anabaptists, Spiritualists and Evangelical Rationalists all of whom, despite their many differences, were nonetheless united by their desire to cut back to the root of Christian faith and free ‘church and creed of what they regarded as the suffocating growth of ecclesiastical tradition and magisterial prerogative’. Williams’s etymologically precise construction had grown out of an earlier terminology favoured by Roland Bainton that discerned a ‘left wing of the Reformation’, and Ernst Troeltsch’s older still application of sociology to the

¹⁹ E. Bittner, ‘Radicalism and the Organization of Radical Movements’, *American Sociological Review*, 28 (1963): pp. 928–40; E. Bittner, ‘Radicalism’, in D. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (17 vols, New York, 1968), 13, pp. 294–300.

²⁰ D. Anthony, *Rethinking Radicalism* (Victoria, Canada, 2003), p. 17; R. Barker, ‘Radicalism’, in N. Smelser and P. Bates (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (26 vols, Amsterdam and Oxford, 2001), pp. 12723–5.

²¹ D.H. Wrong, ‘radicalism’, in W. Outhwaite (ed.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Social Thought* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2002), Blackwell Reference Online, <http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9780631221647_chunk_g978063122164721_ss1-3>

study of Christian thought that identified two main patterns – the Church-type and the Sect-type.²² His critics, however, maintained that the supposed unifying forces underpinning this vision of an ‘extremely capacious’ Radical Reformation were undercut by sectarian subdivisions and inconsistencies, by heterogeneity as well as by a ‘highly fissiparous tendency’.²³ Then during the mid-1980s Adolf Laube, an East German Marxist historian who, in common with his compatriots, sought to legitimate the German Democratic Republic by emphasising bourgeois and popular revolutionary antecedents together with the wider European significance of events in German lands (the *Reich*) between the beginning of the Reformation and the German Peasants’ War, questioned the appropriateness of the term radical to encompass disparate sixteenth-century phenomena, arguing that it referred not so much ‘to a substantive content as to an adjectival quality’. He also noted that radical was a ‘relative term’, subject during revolutionary periods to ‘rapid change’: what was radical at one instance could quickly become the norm and hence moderated.²⁴ Agreeing with Laube that the meaning of radical is ‘always defined by circumstances at a given time’, that ‘what is radical at one time may cease to be so a short time later’, Hans Hillerbrand defined radical reformers during the Reformation as ‘only those who undertook to alter the existing societal order on the basis of religion’. Having outlined common denominators as well as essential points of divergence, Hillerbrand concluded that a Radical – or as he preferred, ‘alternate’ – Reformation occurred because of ‘a general yearning for change and a desire for renewal’.²⁵ Yet, despite all these objections and qualifications, the Radical Reformation remains part of the vocabulary of early modern historians even though it has since undergone an evolution from its basis in Church history and concomitant theological and denominational concerns to accommodate growing historical awareness of the social and cultural impact of religion.²⁶

²² G. Williams and A. Mergal (eds), *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation* (London, 1957), pp. 19–22, 27–8; G.H. Williams, ‘Studies in the Radical Reformation (1517–1618): A Bibliographical survey of research since 1939’, *CH*, 27 (1958): pp. 46–7; G. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (3rd edn, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. xxix–xxx, 1, 7, 9–10; cf. R.H. Bainton, ‘The Left Wing of the Reformation’, *Journal of Religion*, 21 (1941): pp. 124–34.

²³ A.G. Dickens, review of *The Radical Reformation*, in *P&P*, 27 (1964): p. 123.

²⁴ P. Peachey, ‘Marxist Historiography of the Radical Reformation: Causality or Covariation?’, *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, 1 (1970): pp. 1–16; A. Laube, ‘Radicalism as a Research Problem in the History of the Early Reformation’, in H. Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Perspectives*, special issue of *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, 9 (Kirksville, MO, 1988): pp. 10–11, 15; cf. Williams, *Radical Reformation*, pp. 1280 n. 69, 1303; Clark, ‘Religion and origins of radicalism’, pp. 241–2.

²⁵ H. Hillerbrand, ‘Radicalism in the Early Reformation: Varieties of Reformation in Church and Society’, in Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies*, pp. 28–30, 40–41.

²⁶ J. Roth, ‘Recent Currents in the Historiography of the Radical Reformation’, *CH*, 71 (2002): pp. 523–35.

Regarding the extensive literature on seventeenth-century England, it is noteworthy that there are parallels with trends in Reformation historiography. Here too a typology with unmistakable modern-day political connotations was developed and employed in conjunction with the term radical. This was the anachronistic ascription of a centre with left and right wings to Protestantism in general and Puritanism in particular. Used since at least 1900, but not fashionable until the later 1930s, the categories were most fully elaborated by A.S.P. Woodhouse in his introduction to the Putney and Whitehall debates, supplemented with other important contemporary texts, entitled *Puritanism and Liberty* (1938). On the Right, where the Puritan Church-type was dominant, were the Presbyterians; the composite party of the Centre were the Independents; while the Parties of the Left, where the Puritan sect-type prevailed, consisted of the Levellers – the ‘one genuinely democratic party’ of the ‘Puritan revolution’ – together with a ‘heterogeneous company’ of religious and political sectaries that included the millenarian Fifth Monarchists and the Diggers.²⁷ Remaining in vogue, albeit with occasional modifications, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, even during part of the 1960s, left-wing puritanism sometimes became interchangeable as a category with radical sectarianism. Hence L.J. Trinterud claimed that:

The radical left-wing Puritan groups, the Fifth Monarchy men, the Levellers, the Diggers, the Baptists, and the other left-wing religious and political groups took the road of radical revolution through the destruction of all old authorities, and a return to the state of nature.²⁸

Thereafter, however, this typology largely fell out of favour except in the eyes of a handful of Marxist historians (to whom we shall return) and several students of Puritanism and Quakerism.

In light of this it is remarkable how few scholars who have regularly used the terms radical and radicalism in a seventeenth-century English context have provided us with a definition – with the notable exception, that is, of some participants in a heated debate about the appropriateness of certain labels to describe political factions in the Long Parliament. Whether this was simply because the majority assumed their readers knew what they meant, and therefore felt it unnecessary, is difficult to determine. Taking Christopher Hill first (in chronological order), he identified as radicals:

those who rejected any state church: both separatist sectaries, who opposed a national church on religious principles, and others – Levellers, Diggers, Fifth

²⁷ A.S.P. Woodhouse, ‘Puritanism and Democracy’, *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 4 (1938): pp. 4, 5, 6, 7, 13; A.S.P. Woodhouse (ed.), *Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates (1647–49) from the Clarke Manuscripts* (1938; 3rd edn, London, 1992), pp. [15–18, 20, 29, 30, 31, 36–9, 75, 81, 83].

²⁸ L.J. Trinterud, ‘The origins of Puritanism’, *CH*, 20 (1951), p. 52.

Monarchists, Ranters, etc. – whose opposition was part of a more general political, social and economic programme.²⁹

By contrast, J.C. Davis initially preferred a broad, vague definition of radicalism in keeping with his suggested approach for evaluating it – ‘the attempt, in theory or practice, to subvert the status quo and replace it, rather than simply to improve or amend it’.³⁰ Again, drawing on the word’s original relationship with roots and fundamental qualities, the editors of the *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* considered radicals to be:

those who sought fundamental change by striking at the very root of contemporary assumptions and institutions, often in order to revert to what they judged to be the proper historic roots.

They too grasped the episodic nature of radicalism and its connection with ‘changing circumstances’, remarking that ‘the essence of radicalism is indeed situational, a seizure of the possibilities of the moment for substantive change’.³¹ A little later Frances Dow equated radicals with those who ‘sought to transform the political and social order’ during the English Civil War. Linking radicalism with social class, she distinguished between assorted types of radicals including certain Parliamentarians, classical republicans, Levellers, Diggers and religious radicals (Particular and General Baptists, Quakers, Ranters, Seekers, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchists, assorted separatists).³² More specifically, for J.F. McGregor and Barry Reay radical religion during the English Revolution consisted of ‘religious movements and ideas which were fundamentally in conflict with official, institutionalized, established religion and theology’.³³ Taking this further Nigel Smith, following Geoffrey Nuttall’s seminal *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1946), singled out three distinguishing features of English ‘radical religion’ evident to different degrees and in a variety of ways: the ‘rejection of

²⁹ C. Hill, ‘The Radical Critics of Oxford and Cambridge in the 1650s’, in C. Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1974), p. 132; cf. C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1994), pp. 196–7.

³⁰ J.C. Davis, ‘Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660’, *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): p. 203.

³¹ R. Greaves and R. Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* (3 vols, Brighton, 1982–84), 1, pp. viii, x; cf. J.C. Davis, ‘Radical Lives’, *Political Science*, 37 (1985): pp. 166–72.

³² F.D. Dow, *Radicalism in the English Revolution 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1985), p. 1, 57.

³³ B. Reay and J.F. McGregor, ‘Preface’, in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. v.

idoltrous “externals””; ‘the assertion that the believer is made perfect through the freely given grace of God’; the ‘feeling that the gift of the Holy Spirit ... could fall upon any individual’.³⁴

Gerald Aylmer also gave us, in an address on the ‘varieties of radicalism’, a pragmatic and still widely quoted definition of radical when applied to mid-seventeenth-century England:

anyone advocating changes in state, church or society which would have gone beyond the official programme of the mainstream puritan-parliamentarians in the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of Divines.³⁵

For the post-Restoration period Richard Greaves justified his ‘judicious use of anachronistic terms’ distinguishing, at least in theory, between a radical and a reformer: ‘a radical aims at nothing less than the replacement of the status quo by something new, whereas a reformer seeks its betterment’. All the same, Greaves acknowledged that the radicals’ ‘greatest weakness’ was their inability to formulate a unified and ‘commonly accepted vision of what the new order would be’. Consequently, British radicals in the early 1660s were effectively ‘a dissident “community” loosely held together by common animosities’.³⁶ Likewise Gary de Krey preferred the ‘somewhat anachronistic and historicist’ designation radical to the ‘antiquarian danger of transposing seventeenth-century terminology like “fanatic” or “Oliverian” into contemporary analytical categories’. Concentrating on the ‘exceptional political community’ of London, he suggested that historians of seventeenth-century political ideas needed to ‘recognize the existence of a variety of radicalisms’.³⁷ De Krey subsequently differentiated between the radical ideology, activities and civic experiences of London dissenters – who in upholding freedom of conscience sought to undermine the persecuting Restoration State – and republican principles.³⁸ Elsewhere he reiterated the point, proposing that London dissenters

³⁴ N. Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed. Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989), p. 2.

³⁵ G.E. Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities in mid Seventeenth-Century England. III. Varieties of Radicalism’, *TRHS*, 5th series, 37 (1988): p. 1.

³⁶ R. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (New York, 1986), pp. 4–6; T. Harris, ‘What’s New about the Restoration?’, *Albion*, 29 (1997): pp. 195–7.

³⁷ G.S. de Krey, ‘The London Whigs and the Exclusion Crisis reconsidered’, in A.L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J. Rosenheim (eds), *The First Modern Society: Essays in English history in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 458, 461, 481; cf. G.S. de Krey, ‘Political Radicalism in London after the Glorious Revolution’, *Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983): p. 590.

³⁸ G.S. de Krey, ‘The First Restoration Crisis: Conscience and Coercion in London, 1667–73’, *Albion*, 25 (1993): pp. 566–7, 571, 578–80; G.S. de Krey, ‘Party Lines: A Reply’, *Albion*, 25 (1993): pp. 642–3.

and Whigs were radical because intellectually they ‘got to the roots’ in a distinctive, innovative and historically significant manner of ‘what was at stake in the erection of a persecuting state’. Accordingly, de Krey defined political radicals as:

those who reject, challenge, or undermine the established political norms or conventions of their day, the intellectual rationales that legitimate those norms or conventions, and the structures of authority that maintain them.³⁹

A decade ago Jonathan Scott declared that radicalism was ‘the demand for fundamental change’. English radicalism, he suggested, ‘came to question customary religious, social, legal, economic and political arrangements’. Such a ‘large-scale demand for change’ in a pre-modern, traditional society was extraordinary.⁴⁰ For Scott, the overarching category here was ‘unity-in-variety’, the ‘concerns the radicals held in common’ over time. It was these ‘unities within the variety of civil war radicalism’, he insisted, that would enable us to apprehend it ‘as a single process rather than as a series of discrete groups’. Connections, fluidity and context were keys to understanding the shape of this process. What is more, Scott discerned three phases of the English radical process (complementing his three phases of seventeenth-century England’s troubles); Civil War radicalism; English republicanism; and Restoration radicalism.⁴¹ Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith also privileged homogeneity over heterogeneity, stressing the ‘common conditions and characteristics’ of English history between 1640 and 1832 that gave consistency to the various political and religious visions enunciating ‘extreme change’ and alternative lifestyles.⁴² Finally, in the interests of making ‘the past more intelligible to the present’, not to mention keeping the attention of a general audience, Philip Baker too believes we should continue using the word ‘radicalism’ in order to convey:

the notion of axiomatic political, constitutional, religious, social, economic or cultural change ... encompass[ing] a number of ideologies that challenged existing arrangements for different reasons and ends.

While this exceedingly broad definition allows Baker to argue that English Civil War radicalism was not ‘a single process with a specific ideological ambition’

³⁹ G.S. de Krey, ‘Radicals, reformers, and republicans: academic language and political discourse in Restoration London’, in A. Houston and S. Pincus (eds), *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 71–80.

⁴⁰ J. Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 35, 229, 231, 233.

⁴¹ Scott, *England’s Troubles*, pp. 6, 37–8, 230, 239–42.

⁴² T. Morton and N. Smith, ‘Introduction’, in T. Morton and N. Smith (eds), *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650–1830. From Revolution to Revolution* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1–2.

but something variegated, complex and in one strand unmistakably secular, it is nonetheless vulnerable to criticism: namely that, in the attempt to facilitate comprehension, a category has been constructed with elastic bounds, one that can be expanded or shrunk according to ever-changing historical circumstances. Indeed, Baker's focus on a 'surprisingly wide spectrum of individuals' who 'fundamentally challenged contemporary arrangements' leaves open the wider question not just of who determines what was fundamental – past actors or present historians – but how one can differentiate between degrees of change; between radicals and reformers; between radicals, moderates and conservatives?⁴³

Much of this debate on the validity of radical and radicalisms as descriptors and their continued usage as explanatory categories therefore hinges on several important issues: our ability to accurately comprehend and reconstruct the reality of a past in flux; precise selection of ideologically neutral words to convey the meaning of that past to present-day audiences; and nuances. The strong dependency of radicalism on context has been correctly highlighted by, among others, Wrong, Laube, Hillerbrand, Scott and Burgess. Context is naturally also central to any discussion that seeks to distinguish between, at one extreme, the demand for fundamental, revolutionary transformation and, at the other, gradual, evolutionary change. Yet, contrary to Davis and Greaves, who have both at times insisted on a sharp distinction between radicalism and reform, we think it more helpful to characterise that relationship as flexible and interwoven rather than static and oppositional.⁴⁴ Neither term, for example, entirely captures either the disposition or the full agenda of all participants at every moment during the English Revolution.⁴⁵ Again, any juxtaposition of radical with moderate, or conservative, must be determined entirely by context, rendering it a situational or relationship term rather than something indicative of content.⁴⁶ Indeed, making radicalism synonymous with extremism, moderation with restraint, and conservatism with preservation can at times be unnecessarily restrictive (radicalism's relationship with conservation and innovation will be discussed shortly).⁴⁷ Otherwise what are we to make of seemingly oxymoronic yet suggestive couplings such as

⁴³ P. Baker, 'Rhetoric, Reality and the Varieties of Civil War Radicalism', in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War: Conflicts and Contexts, 1640–49* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 202–5, 216, 223–4.

⁴⁴ Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', pp. 203–04; Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil*, p. 5; cf. Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 152.

⁴⁵ Cf. Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', pp. 7, 15, 22–4.

⁴⁶ Cf. Greaves and Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, 1, p. viii; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', pp. 529, 530, 532, 535–6, 541; Condren, *Politics of Language*, pp. 141, 147, 152, 155–6, 159–60, 162; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 63, 69–70, 73.

⁴⁷ Cf. Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', p. 537; Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 149; Condren, 'Afterword', pp. 314, 317.

Catholic radicals,⁴⁸ Royalist radicals,⁴⁹ and so-called radical conservatives like the Clubmen?⁵⁰ These unusual conjunctions alert us to the interpretative possibilities of recasting radical and radicalism as fluid, situational categories that contravene conventional boundaries in complex ways.

Given these difficulties, not least because the meanings of words are supplied rather than inherent, it might be best therefore to eschew definitions of radical and radicalism. To appropriate a famous quotation, we may not be able to define early modern English radicalism, but we know it when we see it. In sum, what radical and radicalism give us with one hand – comprehensibility, coherence, and homogeneity – they take away with the other – anachronism, inconsistency, and heterogeneity. We turn now to how scholars have approached writing about people considered to be radicals or individuals who were radicalised at moments in their lives and, given its multifarious, context-specific manifestations, what might better be thought of as radicalisms rather than radicalism.

Writing Radicalisms

It is a commonplace that the past is at the mercy of the present and that in every generation there are those who deliberately distort aspects of it to reflect a vision of their own or another's making. Most historical writing about radicalism in early modern England, and particularly during the English Revolution (with which this section is mainly concerned), can be considered fabrication in the sense of both manufacture and invention. There have been several important studies documenting this process,⁵¹ and it exemplifies what Burgess has called a substantive approach: there was 'a continuous radical tradition of definable identity'.⁵² All the same, this was a malleable tradition and consequently one readily appropriated for political purposes. Indeed, although the nineteenth century witnessed the piecemeal

⁴⁸ M. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England. Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 159.

⁴⁹ C. Hill, 'Two radical royalists', in C. Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume One. Writing and Revolution in 17th Century England* (Brighton, 1985), p. 275; B. Capp, 'The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 184.

⁵⁰ Dow, *Radicalism in English Revolution*, p. 80; J. Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces. The People of England and the Tragedies of War 1630–1648* (2nd edn, London and New York, 1999), pp. 122, 136, 198, 204.

⁵¹ R.C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution: Revisited* (1977; 3rd edn, Manchester, 1998); A. MacLachlan, *The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England. An Essay on the Fabrication of Seventeenth-Century History* (Basingstoke, 1996); M. Caricchio, *Popolo e Rivoluzione? La storiografia e i movimenti radicali della Rivoluzione inglese* (Milan, 2005).

⁵² Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 2.

rediscovery or recovery of what is now generally called English radicalism, that process was predominantly associated with two broad historiographic currents. One was bourgeois and liberal, essentially concerned with tracing the growth of democratic and republican ideas in response to acute social and economic tensions as well as drawing parallels between the English and French Revolutions. The other was Socialist and Marxist, likewise emphasising secular class struggle but this time under the shadow of capitalism. These trends dominated the field for the first seventy or so years of the twentieth century. Yet both lacked the ability to effectively integrate denominational history – traditions of religious dissent – within their conception of radicalism.⁵³

While the former tendency was promoted during the first half of the twentieth century by certain North American-based scholars concerned with the development of individual liberties and constitutional restraints on the authoritarian exercise of power, as well as the intellectual antecedents of the American Revolution, the latter became particularly associated with, among others, Protestant nonconformists, Jewish-born intellectuals, members of the Fabian Society and Communists. For it was one-time English members of the Communist Party and the briefly influential Historians' Group of the Communist Party such as Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, A.L. Morton and E.P. Thompson who were instrumental in creating a 'progressive rationalist tradition' of Marxist history that was severely critical of 'non-Marxist history and its reactionary implications'. Noted for its 'moral exhortation', their passionately debated agenda had an urgent tone because, as Hill remarked, 'History plays an important part in the battle of ideas today'. Furthermore, Hill underlined the political value of a Marxist approach, believing that it alone could 'restore to the English people part of their heritage of which they have been robbed'.⁵⁴ Hence, while Morton penned *A People's History of England* (1938), Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and Hilton *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (1973), Hill for his part turned from a doctrinaire Soviet-style class conflict explanation of a supposed 'English bourgeois revolution' during the mid-seventeenth century to a readjusted conception of Marxism that gave greater attention to 'History from below': *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English*

⁵³ A. Hessayon, 'Fabricating radical traditions', in Caricchio and Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/hessayon2_radical.html>.

⁵⁴ E. Hobsbawm, 'The Historians' Group of the Communist Party', in M. Cornforth (ed.), *Rebels and Their Causes. Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton* (London, 1978), pp. 21–47; R. Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians, 1880–1980: Part One', *New Left Review*, 120 (1980): pp. 26–8, 39–42, 51–5, 73–5; H. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 8–22, 99–130; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 79–87, 101–21.

Revolution (1972).⁵⁵ The fruit of this largely co-operative venture was what can be termed the canonical English radical tradition: a single, continuous narrative spanning from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 to the Chartists and the modern working-class movement.⁵⁶ Yet it appears that these histories also had another, self-serving, purpose as Burgess has most recently observed:

The core historical project lay in the relationship of present to past embedded in the recovering of a radical or revolutionary heritage that could make communism not an alien, foreign and unpatriotic implant into the green and pleasant lands of the sceptred isle but a suppressed, native tradition.⁵⁷

Since this canonical English radical tradition was, as several British Marxist historians believed, a consequence of the class struggles that ensued during the transition from feudalism to a developed form of capitalism, it is instructive to remind ourselves with which social classes particular radical groups were identified – regardless of whether they exhibited class-consciousness in the sense that they were aware of ‘shared interests in the process of struggling against common enemies’.⁵⁸ According to John Lilburne, Leveller support was drawn not from the dregs of English society but ‘the hobnails, clouted shooes, the private souldiers, the leather and woollen Aprons, and the laborious and industrious people’.⁵⁹ In Hill’s earliest formulation, therefore, the Levellers were the petty bourgeoisie’s mouthpiece, although they ‘never represented a sufficiently homogeneous class to be able to achieve their aims’. The most radical and egalitarian ‘opponents of the feudal social order’, however, were the Diggers who represented a ‘small if growing class’ that was nonetheless weakened by the pacifism preached by their leaders.⁶⁰ In a subsequent essay on ‘The Norman Yoke’, the Levellers were depicted as the ‘most advanced democratic group’ on the European political stage, ‘appealing to the small proprietors in town and countryside’ against the survivals

⁵⁵ C. Hill, ‘Soviet Interpretations of the English Interregnum’, *Economic History Review*, 8 (1938): pp. 159–67; C. Hill, *The English Revolution 1640. An Essay* (1940; 3rd edn, 1955; reprinted, London, 1979); Richardson, *Debate on the English Revolution*, pp. 112–27, 173–5; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 46–7, 55–63.

⁵⁶ C. Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers’, in C. Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume Two. Religion and politics in 17th century England* (Brighton, 1986), pp. 89–116; A.L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution* (London, 1970), p. 15.

⁵⁷ Burgess, ‘Introduction’, p. 4; cf. Samuel, ‘British Marxist Historians’, pp. 51, 55; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 39–40.

⁵⁸ Kaye, *British Marxist Historians*, pp. 126, 232–41.

⁵⁹ John Lilburne, *The Upright Mans Vindication* (1653), p. 15.

⁶⁰ Hill, *English Revolution 1640*, pp. 49–52; cf. Hill, ‘Soviet Interpretations’, p. 162.

of feudalism that underpinned their bondage to the ruling class.⁶¹ Class hostility and the propertied class's 'thinly concealed' contempt for the 'rude', 'unruly' and 'giddy-headed' multitude – that 'rascal company' of the 'meaner sort of people' and masterless men – was the focus of another essay on 'The Many-Headed Monster' and the 'fear of lower-class revolt'.⁶² This supposed 'class antagonism', together with a long-standing tradition of 'plebeian anti-clericalism and irreligion', subsequently provided the backdrop for Hill's delineation of a popular revolt that threatened the propertied in *The World Turned Upside Down*.⁶³ Here, on the 'left wing of radical Puritanism', the Levellers, following Soviet theory, comprised both a 'moderate, constitutional wing' that upheld existing property relationships, and 'a more radical wing in the Army and among the London populace' that defended poor commoners against the rich. Further along the continuum was the untainted communism of the Diggers, seemingly 'only the visible tip of the iceberg of True Levellerism', with Gerrard Winstanley representing the interests of 'those whom the "constitutional" Levellers would have disfranchised – servants, labourers, paupers, the economically unfree'. Antinomianism was regarded as 'Calvinism's lower-class alter ego', Ranter swearing an act of defiance against God and 'Puritan middle class standards', while prophecy was reduced to an attention-seeking tactic by lower-class radicals.⁶⁴ In the same vein, Morton had portrayed the 'aggressive radicalism' of the Ranters – which 'formed the extreme left wing of the sects' – as a primarily urban movement appealing to the 'defeated and declassed', drawing support from London's 'impoverished artisans and labourers' as well as 'wage earners and small producers' in numerous towns.⁶⁵ So, too, Hill's former pupil Brian Manning, although never a member of the Communist party, likewise understood the bulk of the Levellers as embodying the aspirations of the 'middle sort of people' in a fundamental conflict between 'rich' and 'poor'; as 'advocating the case of the independent small producers' (craftsmen and farmers) against the

⁶¹ C. Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958; Harmondsworth, 1990 edn), pp. 81, 86, 88; Kaye, *British Marxist Historians*, pp. 120–22.

⁶² C. Hill, 'The Many-Headed Monster', in Hill, *Change and Continuity*, pp. 183, 186, 193, 195, 196, 198, 202; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 135.

⁶³ C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1984 edn), pp. 19, 25, 35–6.

⁶⁴ Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 14–16, 97, 114, 121, 138, 162, 202–3, 280, 358; cf. Kaye, *British Marxist Historians*, pp. 123–6; B. Reay, 'The World Turned Upside Down: A Retrospect', in G. Eley and W. Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution: Reflections and Elaborations on the Work of Christopher Hill* (London, 1988), pp. 57, 64–6; D. Underdown, 'Puritanism, Revolution and Christopher Hill', in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, pp. 336, 337–8; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 189.

⁶⁵ Morton, *World of the Ranters*, pp. 17–18, 70, 110–12; cf. MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 71.

powerful and privileged on the one hand, and the ‘poorer peasants and landless labourers’ beloved of the Diggers on the other.⁶⁶

The Marxist preoccupation with class struggle may understandably have found little support among the wider community of historians of seventeenth-century England,⁶⁷ but it did raise the associated question of the extent of radicalism’s appeal.⁶⁸ Hill’s *The World Turned Upside Down*, for example, tended in effect if not intent, as Peter Burke and Barry Reay noted, ‘to conflate the radical with the popular’.⁶⁹ Similarly, although Aylmer accepted that ‘popular and radical were not identical’, he still insisted that neither were they antithetical or mutually exclusive.⁷⁰ Nor did the lack of evidence for widespread radical religious sentiments during the English Revolution prevent Reay and McGregor from claiming that they were nonetheless ‘popular in the sense of articulating the hopes and grievances of those outside the ruling groups of English society’.⁷¹ For even Hill eventually conceded that while the radical ideas of the period remained of immense historical significance, the radicals themselves – like the French and Russian revolutionaries – were a minority during the mid-seventeenth century.⁷² Indeed, the entire spectrum of those identified as radicals by Hill, Morton and others never exceeded 3.85 per cent of an estimated population ranging from 5.09 to 5.28 million people between 1641 and 1661: perhaps as many as 25,000 Baptists in 1660; at most a few hundred Diggers and their adherents; probably less than 10,000 Fifth Monarchists; reportedly, though possibly exaggeratedly,

⁶⁶ B. Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (1976; 2nd edn, London, 1991), pp. 378–80, 396; cf. Brian Manning, *1649: The Crisis of the English Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 108, 111, 115; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 140–42.

⁶⁷ Cf. G.E. Aylmer, ‘Gentlemen Levellers?’, *P&P*, 49 (1970): p. 121; Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities’, pp. 9–10; Manning, *English People*, pp. 7–47; Burgess, ‘Introduction’, pp. 8, 11; Burgess, ‘Radicalism and English Revolution’, pp. 64–5; J.C. Davis, ‘Afterword: Reassessing Radicalism in a Traditional Society: Two Questions’, in Burgess and Festein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 349–50, 354.

⁶⁸ MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 140.

⁶⁹ Reay, ‘World Turned Upside Down’, in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, pp. 61–2; cf. J. Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), p. 192.

⁷⁰ Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities’, pp. 10, 20.

⁷¹ Reay and McGregor, ‘Preface’, in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. v.

⁷² C. Hill, *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* (Madison, WI, 1980), pp. 8–9; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, pp. 15–16; Underdown, ‘Puritanism, Revolution and Christopher Hill’, in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, p. 337; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, p. 193; cf. Scott, *England’s Troubles*, p. 35.

anything from 10,000 to 98,064 or more backers of major Leveller-orchestrated petitions; several hundred Muggletonians; a maximum of 60,000 Quakers by the early 1660s; a handful of actual Ranters; and an unknown number of republicans and other sectaries.⁷³ Leaving aside the obvious methodological issues of counting youthful and adult radicals – as if shifting allegiances, signing petitions, supporting political movements, membership of religious communities that had separated from the Church of England, maintaining heterodox and inflammatory beliefs, or some combination thereof at different moments during the turbulent years of rebellion in Ireland, Civil Wars in Britain, regicide and republican rule were straightforwardly indicative of self-conscious radical identities – there is also the question of geographical distribution.⁷⁴

A number of studies – notably David Underdown's pioneering work on Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire; Mark Stoyle's research on the perceived and actual characteristics that made Cornwall's relatively isolated inhabitants distinctive; and Andy Wood's examination of miners in the 'Peak' district of north-west Derbyshire – have explored the interrelated questions of whether environment in combination with other factors such as social structure, economic activities, religious beliefs and literacy rates shaped regional cultures and identities, and whether ecology was therefore a significant determinant of allegiance during the English Revolution. While there were undoubtedly regional contrasts between settlement patterns in arable districts and those in the fens and forests, not to mention a variety of colourful local customs, entertainments and sports, John Morrill has rightly cautioned against placing too much weight on environment in shaping political loyalties.⁷⁵ Similarly, although Hill attempted to discern doctrinal

⁷³ E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871. A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 528; J.F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 33; J. Gurney, *Brave Community. The Digger Movement in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 128–37, 184–96; B. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), pp. 76–82; Capp, 'Fifth Monarchists', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 174; John Lilburne, *An impeachment of high treason against Oliver Cromwel* (London, 1649), pp. 21–2; Anon., *The Remonstrance Of many Thousands of the Free-People of England* (London, 1649), p. 8; H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (ed.) C. Hill (1961; 2nd edn, Nottingham, 1983), pp. 13, 347, 486–7, 574; Dow, *Radicalism in English Revolution*, pp. 51–2; B. Reay, 'The Muggletonians: An Introductory Survey', in C. Hill, B. Reay and W. Lamont (eds), *The World of the Muggletonians* (London, 1983), pp. 50–55; B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (Hounslow, 1985), pp. 11, 26–9; cf. J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History. The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 75, 124.

⁷⁴ Cf. Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', p. 195; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', p. 540; Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 162; Condren, 'Afterword', p. 320; Davis, 'Afterword', pp. 343, 365.

⁷⁵ D. Underdown, 'The Problem of Popular Allegiance in the English Civil War', *TRHS*, 5th series, 31 (1981), pp. 69–94; D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion:*

and geographical continuities between fifteenth- and seventeenth-century radicals, particularly in pastoral, forest, moorland and fen areas where ecclesiastical control was less tight, the argument was difficult to sustain and consequently dismissed by Aylmer as an unsophisticated form of ‘geographical determinism’.⁷⁶ All the same, manifestations of ideas unquestionably radical in their context occurred, as several historians have pointed out, primarily in urban settings. London, ‘the largest protestant city in Europe by 1640’, was undoubtedly the most important centre, with parishes like St Stephen Coleman Street a notorious ‘hive of religious radicalism’.⁷⁷

London’s densely populated intra-mural parishes and burgeoning suburbs, continually depleted by high levels of mortality but swelled by a stream of migrants, provided the conditions conducive for extending pre-existing social networks based in large measure on shared ethnicity, kinship and social status as well as neighbourliness, religious affiliation, economic interests, friendship and love. These interconnections in turn facilitated mustering political support through traditional methods, like petitioning the Crown, Parliament or governing elites for redress of grievances. The transition from passing around handwritten petitions and from disseminating manuscript copies of texts more generally, to circulating printed petitions within the framework of an efficient method of distributing printed literature indicates both the adaptability of the London print trade to changing consumer markets and impressive levels of organisation.⁷⁸ Furthermore, following belated engagement with Jürgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962; English translation, 1989) there has been a sustained examination of the variety of other ways through which debates were conducted and opinion mobilised in early modern media; notably broadsides, newsletters, newspapers, pamphlets, plays, proclamations, rumours, scribal publication, sermons, speeches and woodcuts. These are considered fundamental for bringing into being public spheres – envisaged as both modes of and spaces for

Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–1660 (Oxford, 1985); M. Stoye, ‘“Pagans or Paragons?”: Images of the Cornish during the English Civil War’, *EHR*, 111 (1996): pp. 299–323; M. Stoye, ‘The Dissidence of Despair: Rebellion and Identity in Early Modern Cornwall’, *JBS*, 38 (1999): pp. 423–44; A. Wood, ‘Beyond Post-Revisionism? The Civil War Allegiances of the Miners of the Derbyshire “Peak Country”’, *HJ*, 40 (1997): pp. 23–40; cf. J. Morrill, ‘The Ecology of Allegiance in the English Revolution’, *JBS*, 26 (1987): pp. 451–67.

⁷⁶ Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers’, in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 2, pp. 89–116; Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities’, pp. 4–5.

⁷⁷ B. Reay, ‘Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction’, in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 12; Manning, *1649*, pp. 36–43; Scott, *England’s Troubles*, p. 231; A. Johns, ‘Coleman Street’, *HLQ*, 71 (2008): pp. 33–54 (at p. 33).

⁷⁸ J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003); D. Hirst, ‘Making Contact: Petitions and the English Republic’, *JBS*, 45 (2006): pp. 26–50.

communication – such as booksellers' shops, coffee houses, markets, squares and other urban locations.⁷⁹ Women too sometimes challenged patriarchal norms by playing visible roles as preachers, messengers, fund-raisers and petitioners, as well as being the authors and publishers of several works competing for attention within the bustling market place of ideas.⁸⁰

As Jason Peacey has shown, propaganda techniques also became more sophisticated, as new relationships developed between polemicists and political patrons keen to exploit print's potential to change attitudes and influence behaviour. Consequently the methods of producing propaganda during what is now termed a 'news revolution' became increasingly 'bureaucratised, centralised and professionalised'.⁸¹ Even so, despite what historians if not bibliographers now refer to as an explosion of print, not to mention Hill's claim that the English Revolution was a short-lived age of 'freedom' when relatively cheap and portable printing equipment may have made it easier than ever before for radical ideas to see the light of day, the desire to censor – as is widely recognised – remained in many quarters.⁸² There were three effective ways in which this could be achieved: through pre-publication, post-publication and self-censorship. Yet, with the effective collapse of pre-publication censorship the licensing system upon which it had been built became increasingly used to protect the publisher's copyright rather than to indicate official approbation. Indeed, lack of a universally agreed strategy and inconsistent practice became a characteristic feature of licensing during the later 1640s and 1650s. Without an equivalent to the Papal Index of prohibited books pre-publication censorship appears to have been almost entirely at the licenser's discretion and as such was utterly ineffective. By contrast, post-publication censorship proved most effective when implemented by those with intimate knowledge of the printing trade. And in exceptional circumstances its outcome could be dramatic. For although no one had been burned at the stake for heresy in England since 1612, the published writings of blasphemers and seditious writers were still consigned to the flames in public book-burning rituals that resembled Protestant *Autos da Fé* by proxy.⁸³

⁷⁹ P. Lake and S. Pincus (eds), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York, 2007).

⁸⁰ K.V. Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *P&P*, 13 (1958): pp. 42–62; Manning, 1649, pp. 135–72; A. Hughes, 'Gender and politics in Leveller literature', in S. Amussen and M. Kishlansky (eds), *Political culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England. Essays presented to David Underdown* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 162–88.

⁸¹ J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers. Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 305.

⁸² C. Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 1, pp. 34, 40, 51; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 17; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, p. 21.

⁸³ A. Hessayon, 'Incendiary texts: book burning in England, c.1640–c.1660', *Cromohs – Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, 12 (2007): 1–25, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/12_2007/hessayon_incendtexts.html>.

Over-dependence on accessible printed sources, however, such as the London bookseller George Thomason's extensive collection of about 24,000 titles now housed in the British Library, meant that Hill, Morton, Manning and others untrained in palaeography neglected a storehouse of archival records. Nor was this point lost on the so-called revisionists, who tended to privilege manuscript materials in the assumption that these enabled the reconstruction of real rather than perceived or supposed events.⁸⁴ Stressing consensus and contingency rather than class or ideological conflict in their analyses of political and religious instability, this paradigmatic revisionist shift was accompanied – at least in the hands of some practitioners – by a renewed emphasis on religious beliefs rather than secular thought. One significant outcome was the marginalisation of radicalism. Prominent figures within the canonical English radical tradition were regarded as unrepresentative of the conforming, traditionalist, uncommitted majority; their extreme opinions advocated for only a brief period of their lives ('a mid-life crisis of epic proportions' in Winstanley's case);⁸⁵ their impact upon society exaggerated both by panicked political elites and skilled propagandists preying on fears of property damage or cautioning against introducing religious toleration and its corollary, moral dissolution. Similarly, conventional forms of popular protest such as food, enclosure and tax riots were reduced in scale and scope and drained of radical ideological content. Instead these incidents were presented as sporadic, uncoordinated, locally specific, largely bloodless examples of conservative disorder – sometimes richly symbolic – that were played out against the backdrop of what John Walter has called a 'public transcript of commonwealth: neighbourliness and the moral community, the good lord and the good king, and the responsibilities of office'.⁸⁶ Indeed, if canonical radicalism was as popular as Marxists and their fellow-travellers maintained, then why did so much of the ancient regime survive the English Revolution, why was there a restoration of the monarchy, what happened afterwards to the defeated radicals, and why did several of the religious communities and political movements of the period vanish almost without trace

⁸⁴ Richardson, *Debate on the English Revolution*, pp. 150–72; G. Burgess, 'On Revisionism: An Analysis of Early Stuart Historiography in the 1970s and 1980s', *HJ*, 33 (1990): pp. 609–27; MacLachlan, *Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England*, pp. 231–51; Caricchio, *Popolo e Rivoluzione?*, pp. 111–51; M. Caricchio, 'Radicalism and the English Revolution', in Caricchio and Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, 3, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/caricchio_radicalism.html>.

⁸⁵ M. Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed. Britain 1603–1714* (Harmondsworth, 1996), p. 196.

⁸⁶ J.D. Walter and K. Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order in early modern England', *P&P*, 71 (1976): pp. 22–42; J.S. Morrill and J.D. Walter, 'Order and Disorder in the English Revolution', in A. Fletcher and D. Stevenson (eds), *Order and Disorder in early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 137–65; Reay, 'World Turned Upside Down', in Eley and Hunt (eds), *Reviving the English Revolution*, pp. 62–3; Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, pp. 1–26, 124–80, 181–95, 196–222 (at p. 206).

until vestiges of their ideologies were rediscovered and refashioned in different contexts during the second half of the eighteenth century?

Hill's answer to the first of these important questions was that 'the revolt within the Revolution' was betrayed by the propertied bourgeoisie, whose Protestant ethic triumphed.⁸⁷ According to Davis's method for evaluating radicalism, however, what Burgess has termed the functional approach, canonical English radicalism failed because it did not sufficiently delegitimize the old monarchical order, established Church and traditional basis of society; nor did it adequately legitimate the new republic, alternative forms of Church government or far-reaching social change; nor was there an effective transfer mechanism to get from the displaced system to its replacement.⁸⁸ And it must be said that Davis's analysis is persuasive.

Thus the republic's failure to fully legitimate itself can be seen in a missed opportunity: notable events in Protestant English history interpreted as signs of providential favour – the accession of Queen Elizabeth, defeat of the Spanish Armada and discovery of the Gunpowder plot – had been memorialised and commemorated for political purposes (as Charles Stuart's 'martyrdom' and his son's restoration were to be too), yet unlike the foundational dates of the American, French and Russian Revolutions, there was no national holiday celebrating a single Parliamentary military victory, only religiously based public fasting expressing communal solidarity.⁸⁹ Again, despite a fresh coat of arms and Parliamentary mace, manufacturing seals, minting coins and medals, commissioning portraits, holding banquets, choreographing triumphal parades, state funerals and foreign ambassadors' visits, not to mention using English in all public documents, the oligarchic republic was supplanted by an uncrowned Lord Protector presiding with the aid of his council and successive Parliaments over a perpetual Reformation implemented by an unsteady alliance of magistracy, ministry and military power.⁹⁰ Furthermore, although an estimated 80,000 soldiers were killed or maimed during the first English Civil War, theatres of conflict in England did not quite resemble the horrors experienced by those German-speaking territories devastated during the Thirty Years War. Contrary to its reputation as a benign conflict conducted

⁸⁷ Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 14–17; cf. Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in English Revolution', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion*, p. 21.

⁸⁸ Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', pp. 202–3; cf. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 5–6; Laube, 'Radicalism as a Research Problem', in Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation*, pp. 13, 20, 23; Burgess, 'Introduction', p. 8; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English Revolution', pp. 62–3, 67–8; Davis, 'Afterword', pp. 338, 341.

⁸⁹ D. Cressy, 'The Protestant Calendar and the Vocabulary of Celebration in Early Modern England', *JBS*, 29 (1990): p. 36.

⁹⁰ S. Kelsey, *Inventing a Republic: The Political Culture of the English Commonwealth, 1649–1653* (Manchester, 1997); D. Hirst, 'The Failure of Godly Rule in the English Republic', *P&P*, 132 (1991): pp. 33–66; C. Durston, *Cromwell's Major-Generals: Godly Government during the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2001).

within strict honorific codes of conduct, atrocities were committed (including on women) and the accepted professional, religious and moral laws of war occasionally transgressed.⁹¹ Yet in its aftermath there was nothing – at least on English soil – comparable to the brutality of *la Terreur* or the Red Terror. Defeated Royalists were imprisoned, disarmed, placed under surveillance and in exceptional circumstances publicly put to death. As with the State's confiscation of property belonging to the Crown, bishops, dean and chapters, so too a number also had their estates seized and sequestered.⁹² There were, however, no mass executions of political prisoners. Similarly, despite longstanding identification of the Pope with Antichrist, stigmatisation of Catholics (accusations of superstition, idolatry, disloyalty, licentiousness), and alarming stories warning of foreign intervention, widespread fear of Popish plots resulted only occasionally in assaults on worshippers departing foreign embassy chapels, some rioting and several executions rather than a Protestant equivalent to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre – again, at least on English soil.⁹³ Puritan iconoclasm was also usually more than just mindless vandalism borne of Biblicist zeal, reflecting in its sanctioned implementation by local elites and Parliamentary commissioners a legalistic distinction between what were considered superstitious and idolatrous artefacts, images and inscriptions on the one hand, and approved components of funeral monuments such as coats of arms and sepulchral brasses on the other.⁹⁴ Even army mutinies over arrears of pay together with arguably pro-Leveller mutinies, had their counterpoint in microcosm with the Diggers' non-resistance. Indeed, if a measure of canonical English radicalism's transformative potential was not merely its ability to turn the

⁹¹ I. Roy, 'England Turned Germany? The Aftermath of the Civil War in Its European Context', *TRHS*, 5th series, 28 (1978): pp. 127–44; B. Donagan, 'Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War', *P&P*, 118 (1988): pp. 65–95; B. Donagan, 'Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War', *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994): pp. 1137–66; M. Stoye, 'The Road to Farndon Field: Explaining the Massacre of the Royalist Women at Naseby', *EHR*, 123 (2008): pp. 895–923.

⁹² H.J. Habakkuk, 'Public finance and the Sale of Confiscated Property during the Interregnum', *Economic History Review*, n.s., 15 (1962): pp. 70–88.

⁹³ R. Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', *P&P*, 52 (1971): pp. 23–55; R. Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 144–67; I.Y. Thackray, 'Zion Undermined: The Protestant Belief in a Popish Plot during the English Interregnum', *History Workshop Journal*, 18 (1984): pp. 28–52; P. Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a Prejudice', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–42* (London, 1989), pp. 72–106; J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558–1689* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 90, 157–8.

⁹⁴ J. Morrill, 'William Dowsing, the Bureaucratic Puritan', in J. Morrill, P. Slack and D. Woolf (eds), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 173–203; J. Walter, 'Popular iconoclasm and the politics of the parish in Eastern England, 1640–1642', *HJ*, 47 (2004): pp. 261–90; Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, pp. 184–6.

old world upside down but to eradicate it, then part of its failure was attributable to moderation, compromise and restraint – the quest for settlement.

Another reason provided for canonical English radicalism's failure was that its modernising agenda was too advanced for a traditional, technologically limited society.⁹⁵ Sometimes, however, this has been reframed as criticism: the notion that radicals were ahead of – or before – their time, with its obvious teleological implications, has been frequently and effectively challenged.⁹⁶ Linked to this is a further key issue; was radicalism essentially innovatory? Yet if so, unless the proposed changes were cloaked in the language of custom or conservation to dampen down hostility, we are in danger of creating a paradox.⁹⁷ For like the preceding Radical Reformation, many of the various ideological manifestations of radicalism during the English Revolution were marked by a desire to return to uncorrupted roots: the prelapsarian purity of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; the primitive Christianity of the Apostles; the unadulterated text of Holy Scripture; the classical republicanism of ancient Rome; the privileges enjoyed by freeborn Anglo-Saxons before the imposition of a Norman Yoke; the fundamental and inalienable provisions of Magna Carta buttressed by precedent, common law and custom. So too millenarian beliefs were based on the expectation of Christ's return in either material or spiritual form; an event preceded by the return of his heralds, the prophets. Again, the legacy of Renaissance Humanism coupled with the effective diffusion of texts by noted Florentine syncretists stimulated interest in a rediscovered ancient theology.

Where a strong case can be made for the innovatory nature of the radicalisms under discussion was in several of the methods adopted by people who were radicalised to achieve their ends, and in the distinctive ways that ideologies which were radical in particular contexts could be expressed. The latter has led to a literary approach, pioneered by Hill's examination of 'radical prose' and exemplified by the rewarding work of Nigel Smith and Nicholas McDowell. Thus Smith has argued that 'the radicals, as churches, sects, and individuals ... created their own distinctive language usages, their own habits of expression and communication,

⁹⁵ Cf. Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 321; C. Hill (ed.), *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 9–10; C. Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 2, pp. 234–6; Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities', p. 12.

⁹⁶ Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society', p. 194; Greaves and Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, 1, p. ix; Condren, *Politics of Language*, p. 151; Scott, *England's Troubles*, p. 233; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 64, 66.

⁹⁷ Cf. Greaves and Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, 1, p. viii; Condren, 'Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates', pp. 533, 537; Condren, *Politics of Language*, pp. 144, 149, 151; Scott, *England's Troubles*, pp. 7, 229, 233–4; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', pp. 63, 68; Greaves, "'That Kind of People'", pp. 105–6; Condren, 'Afterword', p. 318; Baker, 'Rhetoric, Reality and Varieties of Civil War Radicalism', p. 204.

their own literature and culture'. Despite Davis's caveat against treating the speech acts and writings of radicals as if they were a category sufficiently homogenous to make valid general statements about, there is still much to be learned from an interdisciplinary approach.⁹⁸

Ultimately, the inescapable conclusion that canonical English radicalism failed in the short term has been glossed over by its advocates, who emphasise instead its long-term achievements: the separation of Church and State; anticlericalism; religious toleration; rationalism; scientific enquiry; the growth of democratic, egalitarian, communist and (lately) environmentalist thought. This too, of course, is teleological. And by overlooking those radicalisms that did not produce these desired outcomes it resembles a form of intellectual natural selection; one privileging only those ideas which were carried through the Enlightenment to our modern age.

Our Contributors' Central Concerns

The essays in this volume originated at a conference held at Goldsmiths, University of London, which invited consideration of individuals, movements, ideologies and events that challenged the fundamental political, religious or social axioms of their day; examined the usefulness of the terms radical and radicalism together with the validity of a radical tradition; and explored the changing nature of radicalism together with the impact of the movement of people, ideas, images and texts across and within geographical boundaries, as well as over time. Addressing these questions in distinct yet interlinked ways, their central concerns include: definitions and how meanings can evolve; context; print culture; language and interpretative techniques; literary forms and rhetorical strategies that conveyed, or deliberately disguised, subversive meanings; and the existence or construction of a single, continuous radical tradition. Naturally, there are no firm conclusions, but we believe there to be an emerging consensus that consolidates recent important work in this field.

Thus one significant outcome is that no contributor denies outright radicalism's usefulness as an explanatory category in scholarly discussions of the early modern period. This suggests that the nominalist approach, for all its thought-provoking scepticism, has found few adherents. Nonetheless, many contributors have emphasised the need for sensitivity to context and consequently the situational, episodic and variegated nature of radicalism. Moreover, by widening the scope of what constituted radicalism our contributors have not only opened

⁹⁸ C. Hill, 'Radical Prose in 17th Century England: From Marprelate to the Levellers', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 1, pp. 75–95; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp. 3, 341; J.C. Davis, 'Puritanism and Revolution: Themes, Categories, Methods and Conclusions', *HJ*, 34 (1991): pp. 485–7; Burgess, 'Matter of Context', p. 3; Burgess, 'Radicalism and English Revolution', p. 68.

up unexpected new directions for research but also contributed towards the gradual process that is shattering the canonical English radical tradition and the Marxist foundations upon which it was constructed. For even though vestiges of radicalism recovered in manuscripts and rediscovered in printed texts did (and do) constitute part of perceived (and sometimes romanticised) radical heritages, the substantive approach to the study of radicalism is problematic – and indeed arguably no longer sustainable.⁹⁹ So much so, that, of the remaining alternatives, the functional approach seems generally closest to a number of the methodologies adopted here.

Turning from methods to recurrent themes, Sarah Hutton's essay is one of several highlighting the softening effect of the passage of time and the necessity of relocating ideas within their original context. Hence, although the Cambridge Platonists' mild disposition now appears to us as 'divorced from the political sphere, and anything but radical', they were, for all their 'sweet reasonableness', decidedly radical in their detractors' eyes. Although Hutton cautions against reconfiguring all aspects of the Cambridge Platonists' milieu within a radical framework, she notes that while some attention has been paid to the reading habits of prominent autodidactic artisans, the Cambridge Platonists' radicalism was likewise derived mainly from exposure to the spoken and written word – even if theirs developed from higher learning. This accords with Nicholas McDowell's argument in his exploration of how post-Tridentine Catholic poetry influenced the army chaplain John Saltmarsh: rather than equating radical with popular culture, 'radical ideas and texts' need to be situated within 'the context of a continuous interaction between humanist and vernacular, "elite" and "popular", traditions'. He maintains that 'radical ideas' can as easily be found in 'mainstream political, religious and intellectual culture as in its margins'. Similarly, Noam Flinker's chapter on the poetics of biblical prophecy illustrates how a 'radical discourse' could be fashioned from Judaic materials, in this instance Abiezer Coppe's appropriation of the rabbinic exegetical technique known as Midrash. Collating scriptural texts into a millenarian declamation which combined warnings about the consequences of social injustice with autobiographical passages recounting spiritual awakening and provocative sexual imagery, enabled Coppe to speak with 'a prophetic voice simultaneously imitative and radically new'. All of which also chimes with Jason Peacey's claim that 'radical ideas ... proved capable of migrating into unexpected areas of the political nation, and across the political spectrum'. His essay begins with an emphatic reaffirmation that the essence of early modern radicalism was situational since it 'was intrinsically conditioned by factors relating to time, place, author, and context, as well as literary form'. Moreover, by demonstrating that 'what was mundane in one moment and one medium could be dangerous at another time and in a different context', Peacey is able to suggest that 'late 1640s "radicalism" became a phenomenon in some ways

⁹⁹ Cf. Edward Vallance, *A Radical History of Britain. Visionaries, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Men and Women who Fought for Our Freedoms* (London, 2009).

distinct from, and capable of breaking down the barriers' between Royalist and Parliamentary political affiliations.

It is also noteworthy that a number of essays tend to focus on individuals – all male – or well-defined social networks. Thus Ariel Hessayon contends that Gerrard Winstanley's heterodox religious views were not an unexpected aberration but the product of a spiritual journey with distinct puritan and Baptist phases. Hessayon argues that 'the imprint of distinctive General Baptist tenets, especially in Winstanley's first five publications, is both unmistakable and crucial for understanding the development of his ideas' and that these are recoverable through reminiscences, citations, allusions, suggestive parallels and circumstantial evidence. Yet if Winstanley's religious radicalism was more deep-rooted and of longer duration than the brief hiatus currently allowed by revisionists, then it must be contrasted with the findings of Sandra Hynes, Giovanni Tarantino and Jason McElligott. For, in their respective chapters on Joseph Boyse (1660–1728) and Ralph Thoresby (1658–1725), Anthony Collins (1676–1729), and William Hone (1780–1842), they demonstrate that people were not always unflinchingly radical: rather they could be radicalised or deradicalised by a combination of personal experience and wider political, social, economic, intellectual, cultural and religious factors. In addition, they suggest that, as with the complex, flexible, symbiotic relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy brought out notably in McDowell's discussion of how Saltmarsh 'forged his radical theology', so radicalism was determined as much by hegemonic attitudes and constraints as its situational characteristics. Thus Hynes suggests that, in light of the religiously 'moderate' Boyse's sensitivity to the treatment of dissenters, 'it was often the State and its Established Church as much as the dissenters that defined the limits of radicalism and orthodoxy'. Similarly, although a leading exponent of the 'Radical Enlightenment', Collins repeatedly hid his identity when 'intervening in the theological, philosophical and political controversies of his age' so that to all intents and purposes his public life was largely uneventful. Hone too, once 'a minor figure in London radical circles' with objectives extending beyond political reform (he disapproved of corruption, oppression, tyranny and bigotry), eventually 'rejected progressive politics and embraced reaction'.

Given our contributors' interest in printed texts, it is worth observing that the Cambridge Platonists, Boyse, Thoresby and Collins were bibliophiles, while the bookseller Hone had an 'encyclopaedic knowledge of early-modern print culture'. Another bookseller, Giles Calvert (1615–63), forms the subject of Mario Caricchio's chapter. Calvert issued and sold writings by several figures discussed in this collection, including Coppe, Saltmarsh and Winstanley. According to Caricchio's reckoning, he published 813 titles, which was almost 9 per cent of the published output of London booksellers from 1641 to 1662. Caricchio argues that the core of Calvert's authorial stable can be considered 'an offshoot of the "radical" wing of the Reformation' and that at the height of the English Revolution individuals identified with a cluster of social networks – which had one nexus at Calvert's bookshop – participated in 'the heated debate about Church settlement

and religious toleration from a shared antinomian and spiritualist standpoint'. Moreover, through 'unity and diversity, publicity and political capability', Calvert's bookshop embodied a significant aspect of 'the "radical substance" that struck at the very foundation of the early-modern State and political culture'. Caricchio, however, acknowledges that, as well as being 'a matter of substance', radicalism was 'a matter of context' – a key aspect being the public space provided by bookshops and the printed word.

Recovering those influences that shaped texts which were radical in particular contexts and tracing these texts' intermittent afterlives have together often formed part of the substantive approach to the study of radicalism. Although he thinks that the canonical English radical tradition is no longer viable as an historical enterprise, Hessayon has nonetheless suggested that 'it is fruitful to consider the Diggers as an offshoot from the main branch of the General Baptists, with roots going back to the Radical Reformation'. All the same, he also recognises that for all the resonances and parallels between Winstanley, his contemporaries and their predecessors, what he shows here is not an unbroken lineage but how a rich genealogy of religious and political ideas can with skilful adaptation furnish material for radical discourses in suitable contexts. Similarly, McElligott accepts 'that there was no trans-historical radical party, no fixed, permanent "programme" for which radicals in each and every age struggled against the same, unchanging enemy'. Even so, he stresses 'that radicals of the English Revolution and the early-nineteenth century (and, one suspects, radicals in every other era of human history) looked to the past for inspiration, legitimation and vindication'. What is more, although 'all traditions – whether radical or conservative, left or right – are shaped, moulded and manufactured', that does not in McElligott's view necessarily make them fabrications. Warren Johnston too underscores continuities in his examination of Protestant apocalyptic ideas after the Revolution of 1688–89, arguing that all the main elements of early- and mid-seventeenth century apocalyptic thought were still present. In addition, he notes that apocalyptic convictions were not the preserve of radicals since they were likewise articulated by mainstream Anglicans and moderate dissenters. Consequently, for Johnston as well, context is paramount: 'a belief can be either radical or not depending on the purpose to and the circumstances within which it is used'.

Interpreting signs of God's providence and apocalyptic rhetoric connects Johnston's essay with Jim Smyth's exploration of English republican empire-building. Going beyond the conventional emphasis 'on immediate political and military contingencies as the thrust behind English expansion in 1649–53', Smyth argues that Protestant providentialists, classical republicans and defenders of *de facto* political authority, among others, shared 'an ingrained and impregnable sense of English superiority' that more often than not was underpinned by their 'belief in England's destiny as an elect Nation'. Again, context – the supposed military threat posed by Ireland, anti-popery, the desire to avenge the 1641 massacres and the need to pay off Parliament's war debts with confiscated Irish land – forged something distinctive; and most clearly in James Harrington's effort in his *The*

Commonwealth of Oceana (1656), ‘to reconcile the republic for increase with the republic for preservation and found an “immortal commonwealth”’. As Smyth reminds us, it was Machiavelli in his *Discourses on Livy* that distinguished between republics for increase (Rome) and republics for preservation (Venice), clearly favouring the former. Machiavelli brings us to Stefano Villani’s chapter on the widespread Italian interest in the English Revolution. Overwhelmingly and unambiguously sympathetic to the defeated Royalists, Italian diplomats and historians tended to interpret the conflict as a political struggle between social elites (the aristocracy) and the mob. Although religious discord was dismissed as a ruse intended to disguise political ambitions, commentators were nonetheless ‘astonished by the proliferation of sects in England’. Curious travellers enumerated these with wonder in textual equivalents of curiosity cabinets, while certain heresiographers compiled baroque bestiaries of the spirit that were ultimately derived from Thomas Edwards’s *Gangraena* (1646). Yet these Catholic writers also understood that when unleashed, religious heterodoxies could strike axe blows to dismember polities and so, vindicated in their belief that these were the rotten fruits of separation from Rome’s spiritual authority, they too warned of the dangers of introducing religious toleration. Furthermore, when confronted by the novelty of Quaker emissaries on the Italian peninsula, inquisitors and wary governing elites frequently dismissed them as extravagant, deluded and ignorant proselytisers.

The ‘enormous distance that separated revolutionary England from Counter-Reformation Italy’ draws our attention to the question of whether the English experience was exceptional, since the prevailing view is that what mainly distinguished the English Revolution from baronial revolts, religious wars, rebellions and the ‘general crisis’ destabilising mid-seventeenth-century Ireland, France, Catalonia, Portugal, Naples and elsewhere, was radicalism. We hope that, despite this volume’s Anglocentric focus, there are enough indications of transnational contexts – the transmission of texts in their original language or English translations, letters from abroad, emigration and foreign journeys – to stimulate research further afield not only on the comparatively less-explored varieties of Irish and Scottish radicalism, but on continental European variants as well. Likewise, we welcome further contextual studies on radicals and radicalisms both within and beyond the chronological span of this collection. Finally, because the conference from which this volume derives aimed to offer new perspectives on radicals and radicalisms, and because its aspirations are explorative rather than conclusive, no fixed editorial position has been imposed on the contributors in their choice of subject matter, nomenclature, method or the conclusions reached. Although some important commonalties, links and themes have been indicated here, to have enforced any overarching interpretative frameworks would have gone against the spirit of this enterprise. The essays have therefore been presented in chronological order. Taken together they offer a sense of the complexity and variety of the subject as well as making the point that much work remains to be done on radicals and radicalism in early modern England and beyond.



Chapter 1

The Beauty of Holiness and the Poetics of Antinomianism: Richard Crashaw, John Saltmarsh and the Language of Religious Radicalism in the 1640s*

Nicholas McDowell

This essay was inspired by a couple of unexpected conjunctions between two of the most infamous religious radicals of the 1640s, Abiezer Coppe (1619–72) and John Saltmarsh (d. 1647), and the Laudian, finally Catholic, poet Richard Crashaw (1612/13–47). The first conjunction occurs in the diary of Thomas Dugard (bap. 1608, d. 1683), the headmaster of Warwick School in the 1630s. Dugard's star pupil was Coppe, who was to become in 1649 the most notorious of the so-called 'Ranters', alleged to subvert the divine economy of sin, heaven and hell through the committing of acts commonly thought to be sinful to demonstrate their release from moral and religious law. In his entries for 1634, Dugard records the fifteen-year-old Coppe coming round to his house after dinner for extra lessons in Latin and Greek. Among the texts that Coppe read to Dugard was Crashaw's *Epigrammata sacrorum liber* (1634).¹ This collection of neo-Latin devotional verse was mostly written by Crashaw to fulfil the conditions of his scholarship at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and was given the unusual honour, for a single-authored volume, of publication by the University Press. Dugard's diary for the period 1632–42 leaves an account of the Puritan circle in which Dugard mixed, revolving around Lord Brooke's hospitality at Warwick Castle. As Ann Hughes has shown, Dugard's diary reveals him to have been part of a "Parliamentary-Puritan connection", a broad circle of the godly that comprised minor provincial figures and prominent national politicians, and which helped to create the challenge to

* This chapter was delivered as a paper at two conferences in the summer of 2006: 'Rediscovering Radicalism in the British Isles, 1500–1800', Goldsmiths, University of London, and 'Religious Heterodoxy in Seventeenth-Century England', Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Cambridge. I am grateful to Ariel Hessayon and William Poole, respectively, for inviting me, and to the audiences for their comments, in particular Anne Dunan-Page, Peter Lake, Anthony Milton, Joad Raymond and Nigel Smith.

¹ BL, Add. MS 23,146, fol. 33v.

Charles I's personal rule'.² However, Dugard's zealous anti-Laudianism evidently did not stop him from enjoying Crashaw's epigrams and using them as a study in neo-Latin eloquence, despite the intense and sensuous liturgical imagery that characterises many of the poems and Crashaw's praise, in the prose address to the reader that prefaces the *Epigrammata*, of the Jesuit writers who have provided him with a model of sacred eloquence.

The second conjunction is to be found in the tracts collected by the London bookseller George Thomason (1602–66). In volume 1152 of the tracts, the second (1648) edition of Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple*, a vernacular collection which includes free translations of many of the Latin epigrams, is collected beside the first (1645) edition of *Free-Grace, or the Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to Sinners* by the New Model Army chaplain John Saltmarsh. Now this may simply be a random pairing by Thomason, about whose organising habits we still know little.³ On the other hand, a few months before the Crashaw volume appeared, Samuel Rutherford (1600–61), the Presbyterian Professor of Divinity at St Andrew's, had responded in some detail to the theological arguments of *Free-Grace*, citing Saltmarsh as the leading English 'antinomian' – by which Rutherford meant someone who believes 'the Saints are perfect, and their works perfect' in this life, and consequently have no need of obedience and repentance. Rutherford warned that the 'Antinomians and Anabaptists now in England joyne hands with Pelagians, Jesuits, and Arminians' for they are all 'enemies to the grace of God'.⁴ For Rutherford, 'antinomian' and Arminian theologies were two sides of the same coin and both heretical inversions of true Calvinist doctrine. In 1648, Rutherford stepped up his attack on Saltmarsh in the vitriolic *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist opening the secrets of Familisme and Antinomianisme, in the Antichristian Doctrine of John Saltmarsh, and William Dell, the present Preachers of the Army now in England*. In fact by 1648 Saltmarsh was no longer a 'present preacher in the Army' – he had died a memorable death in December 1647 after travelling, though seriously ill, to tell Fairfax and Cromwell that God was angry with them for imprisoning the Levellers.⁵

² Ann Hughes, 'Thomas Dugard and his Circle in the 1630s: A "Parliamentary-Puritan" Connexion?', *HJ*, 29 (1986): p. 784.

³ Jason McElligott points out how little we know about how Thomason read or regarded the publications he collected in *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 36.

⁴ Samuel Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* (London, 1647), 'To the Reader', sigs. A3r, A4v–B1r.

⁵ See *Wonderfull predictions declared in a message, as from the Lord, to his Excellency Sr. Thomas Fairfax and the Councill of his Army. By John Saltmarsh preacher of the Gospell. His severall speeches, and the manner of his death. December 29. 1647* (London, 1647); *Englands Friend Raised from the Grave Being the true copies of three letters written by Mr. John Saltmarsh, a little before his death* (London, 1649); also Roger Pooley's entry for Saltmarsh in the *ODNB*.

Might Thomason's binding of *Free-Grace* and *Steps to the Temple* be more than coincidence? Might it indicate his recognition of the linguistic and theological similarities between Saltmarsh's prose and Crashaw's poetry? In terms of theology, there is a shared emphasis on Christ crucified and the assurance of salvation in the writings of the 'antinomian' Saltmarsh and the Laudian, Catholic-leaning Crashaw. More intriguingly, the rhetorical resources which Saltmarsh used to express this assurance of salvation also originated in the neo-Latin poetics practised in Caroline Cambridge. Reading Saltmarsh alongside Crashaw will reveal how the experience of writing neo-Latin devotional verse in Cambridge in the 1630s provided Saltmarsh with a language to express a tolerationist, antinomian theology in the 1640s, just as it provided Crashaw with a poetics for a Laudian, Anglo-Catholic theology.⁶ As the young Coppe's reading of Crashaw's Latin verse indicates, the assumption that the language of English radical religion in the 1640s was a language of popular biblical apocalypticism which 'had nothing to do with Renaissance Latinity' needs revision.⁷ We need rather to place radical ideas and texts in the context of a continuous interaction between humanist and vernacular, 'elite' and 'popular', traditions, rather than automatically equating radical culture with popular culture.⁸ Glenn Burgess has recently argued that early modern radicalism should not be

⁶ As Rutherford's usage suggests, the term 'antinomian' was essentially one of abuse, and was linked by those who used it with immoral and libertine behaviour, whereas the claim to define properly the 'free grace' of God, as Saltmarsh does in *Free-Grace*, was one made by all sides in the disputes of the mid-seventeenth century; see M. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–41* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), p. 1. At the same time it is not quite true, as is often claimed, that the term 'antinomian' was never accepted as self-descriptive. The Leveller leader William Walwyn writes in his *Just Defence* (1649): 'I, through God's goodnesse, had long before been established in that part of doctrine (called then, Antinomian) of free justification by Christ alone; and so my heart was at much more ease and freedom, then others, who were entangled with those yokes of bondage, unto which Sermons and Doctrines mixt of Law and Gospel, do subject distressed consciences', see J.R. McMichael and B. Taft (eds), *The Writings of William Walwyn* (Athens, GA, 1989), pp. 395–6. 'Antinomian' is used as a label by David R. Como in his study of the pre-war origins of religious radicalism, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, CA, 2004), although he is careful to emphasise the difficulty of defining the term. In this essay I will refer to Saltmarsh's 'antinomian' theology to underline the radical implications of his ideas as they were received by more orthodox Calvinist contemporaries.

⁷ R. Pooley, *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century, 1590–1700* (London and New York, 1992), p. 164.

⁸ This is the central argument of N. McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford, 2003). See also N. McDowell, 'Writing the Literary and Cultural History of Radicalism in the English Revolution', in M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars. Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th–18th Centuries)* (2006–2007): 1–4 <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/mcdowell.html>.

approached as a ‘phenomenon with a continuous existence’ but as one ‘forged, and forged repeatedly, from the discursive and cultural materials – e.g. the languages – that lay to hand’. These languages may be as likely to reinforce as subvert pre-war orthodoxies and to be found in the mainstream political, religious and intellectual culture as in its margins.⁹ The language of neo-Latin poetics which was part of the orthodox education of both Crashaw and Saltmarsh in Caroline Cambridge was also part of the ‘cultural and discursive material’ from which Saltmarsh forged his radical theology amidst the unprecedented religious innovation of the Civil Wars. And Coppe’s teenage lessons in Crashavian eloquence may even tell us something about the origins of his ecstatic ‘Ranter’ prose.

Crashaw’s verse is best known for its use of sensuous and erotic imagery to convey the loving relationship between Christ and man. The physicality of the descriptions of Christ’s crucifixion is conventionally associated with a continental ‘baroque’ poetics that Crashaw derived from his reading of Jesuit and Counter-Reformation writers. This interpretation fits neatly, perhaps too neatly, with Crashaw’s later conversion to Catholicism after he left for the Continent when Cambridge was occupied by the Parliamentary Army in 1643.¹⁰ A fine example of Crashaw’s extravagant, some have said grotesque, play with the spiritual significance of the physical ravages suffered by Christ’s body is ‘On the Wounds of our Crucified Christ’, which is a vernacular rendering of one of the neo-Latin epigrams:

O these wakeful wounds of thine!
 Are they Mouthes? Or are they eyes?
 Be they Mouthes, or be they eyne,
 Each bleeding part some one supplies.

Lo! A mouth, whose full-bloom’d lips
 At too deare a rate are roses.
 Lo! A blood-shot! that weepes
 And many a cruel teare discloses.

O thou that on this foot hast laid
 Many a kisse, and many a Teare,
 Now thou shal’t have all repaid,
 Whatso’ere thy charges were.

⁹ Burgess, ‘Radicalism and the English revolution’, p. 68.

¹⁰ See, for example, A. Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility* (London, 1957); R.V. Young, *Richard Crashaw and the Spanish Golden Age* (New Haven, 1982).

This foot hath got a Mouth and lippes,
 To pay the sweet summe of thy kisses:
 To pay thy Teares, an Eye that weeps
 In stead of Teares such Gems as this is.

The difference onely this appears,
 (Nor can the change offend)
 The debt is paid in *Ruby*-Teares,
 Which thou in Pearles did'st lend.¹¹

The constantly shifting images of blood and water, kisses and tears, rubies and pearls, invoke transubstantiation and sacramental ceremony. Such imagery is difficult to comprehend on a visual, as opposed to an emotional, level, just as the incarnation and Passion, and their repetition in Eucharistic ritual, defy rational comprehension. The use of paradox and antithesis conveys the resolution of the seeming opposites of law and mercy, the 'type' of the Old Testament and the 'anti-type' of the Gospel, through the saving grace of Christ's blood.

Crashaw's poetry was mostly written while he was at Cambridge, before his conversion to Catholicism. Yet, as Thomas Healy observes in his fine little book on Crashaw's poetic evolution, Crashaw's verse is 'distinguished by a confidence in salvation unusual in Protestant writing'. We might attribute this confidence to the development of Crashaw's Arminianism at Cambridge: he was elected in 1635 to a Fellowship at Peterhouse, the college at the heart of the Laudian movement. Healy shows how the vernacular expansions of the neo-Latin epigrams in *Steps to the Temple* tend to increase the physicality of the imagery, consistent with 'Laudian ideas on the use of physically exaggerated and explicit imagery in describing sacred events'.¹² Yet the assurance of salvation and the celebration of the physicality of Christ crucified are also to be found in Saltmarsh's *Free-Grace*. For both 'antinomian' and Laudian oppose a bleeding, loving Christ – whose blood is testimony to his love – to the Old Testament God of Law who, as Saltmarsh puts it, 'commands us ... as a *Lawgiver*, and *Tutor*, or *Minister*', and whose 'end' is 'to bondage, fear, tutorship, revealing of sin, outward obedience and conformity'.¹³

In *Free-Grace*, Saltmarsh maintains that those who experience the revelation of the free grace purchased by Christ's death are released absolutely from the bondage of external laws and are perfected on earth, regardless of works: 'The *Spirit of Christ* sets a *beleever* as *free* from *Hell*, the *Law*, and bondage here on *Earth*, as if he were in *Heaven*; nor wants he anything to *make* him *so*, but to make him *beleeve* that he is *so*'. It is important to note that this is not a proclamation of

¹¹ *The Poems, English Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw*, ed. L.C. Martin (2nd edn, Oxford, 1957), p. 99. All references to Crashaw's poetry are to this edition.

¹² T. Healy, *Richard Crashaw* (Leiden, 1986), pp. 64, 127.

¹³ John Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace: or, the Flowings of Christs Blood freely to Sinners* (2nd edn, London, 1646), p. 148.

universal salvation or even of the potential for all to obtain salvation.¹⁴ In the opening page of the tract, Saltmarsh declares his intention to separate grace from works, ‘for else it is but a Popish, an Arminian free-grace’. And while the Presbyterian heresiographers represented antinomianism as a belief in universal redemption and thus as a subversion of the Calvinist doctrine of election, the conception of free grace held by Saltmarsh and his fellow Army chaplain William Dell really extended Calvinist theology to its logical conclusions. If works are irrelevant to salvation and some have been predestined to be saved whether they are sinners in this life or not, then anyone, no matter their status in society or their level of education, could be one of God’s saints. Saltmarsh consequently rejected the spiritual authority of education and ordination in favour of the truths vouchsafed by the experience of free grace. As Saltmarsh emphasised in *Sparkles of Glory* (1647), which was dedicated to Parliament, the theology of free grace made the notion of an ordained clergy, qualified by a linguistic education, redundant. Moreover the antinomian conviction that the new dispensation of grace had abrogated absolutely the Mosaic Law could lead to the defence of religious toleration, as advanced by Saltmarsh in *Groanes for Liberty* (1646). As David Wootton has explained in his analysis of the theological underpinnings of Leveller ideas:

If grace was free then the magistrate was not obliged to punish the wicked for their own moral good and as an example to others, but only insofar as was necessary for the protection of society. He no longer had any role to play in the salvation of men’s souls, or any obligation to prevent the ungodly from sharing power with the godly.

Wootton sees this understanding of the relationship between law and grace, Old and New Testaments, type and antitype, as ‘crucial to the religious defence of Leveller principles’. Indeed, though Saltmarsh ‘was never part of the Leveller organization, he supported many of their aims, and was cited by them in the Putney debates’.¹⁵ It was surely the rejection of a clerical caste and of religious uniformity that upset Presbyterian heresiographers such as Rutherford and Thomas Edwards, in

¹⁴ Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, p. 140; L.F. Salt, ‘John Saltmarsh: New Model Army Chaplain’, *JEH*, 2 (1951): pp. 69–80. A.L. Morton’s extensive discussion of Saltmarsh in *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution*, (London, 1970), pp. 45–69, is misleading in this respect.

¹⁵ D. Wootton, ‘Leveller Democracy and the Puritan Revolution’, in J.H. Burns (ed.), with the assistance of M. Goldie, *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991; 1996), pp. 438–9; Pooley, entry for Saltmarsh in the *ODNB*. See also the comparison of Milton and Saltmarsh on grace, law and toleration in Joan S. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton’s Great Poems* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 97–103.

whose *Gangraena* (1646) Saltmarsh figures prominently, as much as any potential justification of libertinism.¹⁶

Nonetheless, what is striking and provocative about Saltmarsh's formulation is the claim that the revelation of free grace perfects the individual on earth, 'as if he were in heaven'. The realisation of earthly perfection through the grace freely obtained from the 'Covenant of the Gospel', which has abrogated the 'Covenant of the Law', issues in ecstatic celebration of the incarnation and of Christ's physical suffering. He writes of Christ's 'bloody sweating ... his peircing, his nailing, his drinking Vinagar and Gall ... his blood flowing out from his feet, hands, and side'.¹⁷ This celebration of violence and suffering also involves an erotic aestheticising of Christ's wounded body: he was 'red in his apparel, as he that treadeth the wine-*presse*', but the blood is also 'his sweet oyntments or powrings out of spirit' which make 'the *Virgins* follow him'.¹⁸ Saltmarsh incorporates the erotic language of Canticles as Christ becomes the Bridegroom who wounds the saved soul as he was wounded, but these are 'the *woundings and meltings of love*'; paradoxically the wound inflicted by Christ on the soul is also a balm, one of the '*Gospel-applications*'.¹⁹ We might compare Crashaw's *Vexilla Regis*:

Look up, languishing soul! Lo where the fair
Badg of thy faith calls back thy care,
 And biddes thee ne're forget
 Thy life is one long Debt
Of love to him, who on this painfull Tree
Paid back the flesh he took for thee.

Lo, how the streames of life, from that full nest
Of loves, thy lord's too liberal brest,
 Flow from an amorous floud
 Of WATER wedding BLOOD.
With these he wash't thy stain, transfer'd thy smart,
And took it home to his own heart.

But through great LOVE, greedy of such sad gain
Usurp't the Portion of THY pain,
 And from the nailes and spear
 Turn'd the steel point of fear,
Their use is chang'd, not lost; and now they move
Not stings of wrath, but wounds of love. (227–8)

¹⁶ See Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 58–61, 200–201, 314–17.

¹⁷ Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, p. 195.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 136.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 37–8.

Crashaw refers to human life as ‘one long Debt’ to Christ, indicating the Arminian emphasis on works which is absent from Saltmarsh’s conception of grace as freely given to the elect. Equally Crashaw’s ‘amorous floud / of WATER wedding BLOOD’ alludes to the stain of sin removed in baptism and to Christ’s bloody sacrifice as repeated in the Eucharist – external ordinances which Saltmarsh bluntly and provocatively rejects in *Free Grace* as irrelevant to the believer because ‘*Christ was crucified for sinners; this is salvation, we need go no further; the work of salvation is past, and finished; sins are blotted out*’.²⁰ This echoes Acts 3:19 in the Authorised Version: ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord’. Saltmarsh’s point is that no repentance is necessary for the already converted. Yet the similarities of thought and expression between Laudian poet and antinomian controversialist are evident as both dwell on the glories of Christ crucified and the resolution of contraries in divine love.

The similarities become even more striking if we consider ‘A Divine Rapture upon the Covenant’, the verses with which Saltmarsh concluded a 1643 pamphlet:

See here a chain of Pearl, and watry dew
 Wept from the side of God for you;
 See here a chain of Rubies from each wound,
 Let down in Purple to the ground:
 Come tye your hearts with ours, to make one Ring,
 And thred them on our golden string.²¹

At this point Saltmarsh had not yet moved to an antinomian position; the pamphlet is a celebration of the covenant theology of the gathered churches. Independents believed that for the elect the dispensation of grace abolished the legal dispensation of the Mosaic Law; the elect were no longer subject to the legal compulsions of a holy commonwealth according to the model of Israel and were free to gather in their own self-administering congregations. However, most Independents also stressed that the magistrate was obliged to establish a national church structure for the unregenerate, for whom the law remained in force; they also tended to emphasise religious ordinances within the congregation and the role of these ordinances in controlling the continuing temptation to doubt and sin.²² Saltmarsh displays no concern for national church structures or the efficacy of ordinances. His emphasis in his Independent tract is, as the poem suggests, almost entirely on

²⁰ Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, p. 191.

²¹ John Saltmarsh, *A Solemn Discourse upon the Grand Covenant* (London, 1643), p. 72.

²² See M. Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: the Separate Churches of England, 1616–1649* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 130–38. Compare G.F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: the Congregational Way, 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1957).

how the ‘flowings of Christ’s blood’ have released believers from the bondage of the law. The imagery of Saltmarsh’s ‘A Divine Rapture Upon the Covenant’ is virtually identical to that of Crashaw’s ‘On the wounds of our Crucified Christ’ – incongruous, paradoxical images of tears and pearls, rubies and bloody wounds, beauty and pain strung together in the elaborate style characteristic of late ‘metaphysical’ verse.

It is less surprising that Saltmarsh writes about Christ and grace like Crashaw when we consider Saltmarsh’s career in Cambridge in the 1630s. For, before his movement towards radical religious ideas in the early 1640s, Saltmarsh had himself been a neo-Latin poet of some standing in Caroline Cambridge. In 1636, to mark his graduation as Master of Arts from Magdalene College, the Cambridge University Press published Saltmarsh’s *Poemata Sacra Latinè et Anglicè Scripta*, a collection of sacred epigrams in both Latin and the vernacular dedicated to, among others, the Master of Magdalene and Sir Thomas and Lady Metham, recusant gentry in Saltmarsh’s native Yorkshire. The language and imagery of Saltmarsh’s ‘A Divine Rapture upon the Covenant’ are evidently indebted to that of his neo-Latin epigrams, such as ‘Aguas Mutatis in Sanguinem’:

No caede erubit, (memorat *miracula Memphis*)
 Murice nec ripis it gravis unda suis.
 Unde cruor fluxit? Nunquid nova vulnèra sensit
 Neptunus? Venae purpura tanta suae?
 Mirac’lum hoc Mosis mirac’lo concolor extat
 Christi: is enim *vino*, hic *sanguine* mutat aquas.²³

Roger Pooley’s entry on Saltmarsh in the *ODNB* declares that ‘there is nothing in [the *Poemata Sacra*] which suggests the political and religious radicalism for which Saltmarsh later became known’. But the erotic and aestheticised images of Christ’s flowing blood and of drinking and feasting on Christ’s wounds which we find in *Free-Grace* are also a recurring feature of the Cambridge epigrams, such as ‘The Resurrection’:

With whatso’ere pale brook thy blushing floud
 Did mix complexions, yet thy bloud’s thy bloud,
 And shall return swift from those watrie tanks,
 Turn crimson current in thy azure banks.

The ‘blushing floud’ that mixes with the ‘watrie tanks’ and ‘pale brook’ resembles Crashaw’s ‘amorous floud / of WATER wedding BLOOD’ in *Vexilla Regis*.

²³ John Saltmarsh, *Poemata Sacra Latinè et Anglicè Scripta* (Cambridge, 1636), p. 6.

Saltmarsh's epigrams exhibit the same erotic fixation with Christ's bleeding wounds as Crashaw's 'On the wounds of our Crucified Christ':

Yet while thou bind'st my wounds up, oh I see
Thine fresh & bleeding, yawning more then mine.
Lord let thy wounds lie open still to me:
To heal my wounds, I'll lay them close to thine.

The eroticised images of the union of the saved soul with Christ that Crashaw develops from Canticles, which have often unnerved modern readers and been associated with his taste for the European baroque, are even more extravagant in Saltmarsh's 'Meditation Upon the Song of Songs'. Saltmarsh's 'wanton, amorous' Christ breathes lust and is 'perfumed with a Grave', like some over-sexed zombie:

How is my Saviour such a lover turn'd?
Is he grown wanton, amorous, that mourn'd?
[...]
Can his complexion suit a Ladies room
Who hath but lately peept out of his tombe?
Whose hair & breath's still powderd with the dust,
Perfumed with a grave, can he breathe lust,
Lust holy like himself?²⁴

The imagery of blood, water and wine in Crashaw's Laudian verse is a linguistic representation of sacramental ceremony and so of the 'legal' religion which Saltmarsh regarded as a form of carnal bondage over the perfected believer, freed from sin. Nonetheless his academic training in the composition of neo-Latin devotional verse provided Saltmarsh with a suitably rich, sensuous and indeed erotic language in which to express the rapturous experience of free grace. The linguistic patterns in both the Anglo-Catholic poetry of Crashaw and the antinomian prose of Saltmarsh originated in the academic traditions of pre-war Cambridge. It is clear, though, that, while Crashaw and Saltmarsh were regarded as heterodox writers by Calvinists in the 1640s, in Caroline Cambridge in the 1630s the poetic style that was to shape the expression of their heterodoxy was uncontroversial – indeed their verse was honoured by publication through the University press.

In fact, as Healy has shown, the sensuous devotional poetics practised by Crashaw and Saltmarsh in their neo-Latin verse derives in part from Counter-Reformation texts on sacred eloquence that were apparently recommended reading for Cambridge undergraduates. One of the fullest surviving accounts of the curriculum, 'Directions for a Student in the Universitie', probably dating from the 1640s and attributed to Richard Holdsworth (1590–1649), recommends rhetorical textbooks by Jesuits, specifically Nicolas Caussin's *De Eloquentia Sacrae et*

²⁴ Saltmarsh, *Poemata Sacra*, vernacular book, pp. 9, 11, 14.

Humanae parallela (1619) and Famianus Strada's *Prolusiones Academicæ, Oratoriae, Historicae, Poeticae* (1617).²⁵ In the university context, Holdsworth was certainly not, like Crashaw, a high church Petrian; from 1637 he was Master of Emmanuel, where the chapel was never formally consecrated and which was a generally Puritan institution in the first half of the seventeenth century. Although he was to support the Royalist cause, in the 1630s he refused to read the 'Book of Sports'.²⁶ His recommendation of Jesuit books on sacred eloquence reveals that the study of Counter-Reformation texts in Cambridge was certainly not confined to Laudian circles.

Peter Sterry (1613–72), the Independent minister appointed preacher to the Council of State immediately after the regicide, entered Emmanuel in 1629 and became a Fellow in 1637; his prose is quoted by Healy to illustrate how the 'sensational devotional techniques' which were instilled in Crashaw by his study of Counter-Reformation rhetorics in Cambridge in the 1630s also influenced the style and thought of those with Puritan affiliations:

O sweet and Divine mystery! O musical Discord, and harmonious Contrariety!
O peaceful and pleasant War! Where the supream Love stands on both sides,
 where, as in a mysterious Love-sport, or a Divine *Love-play*, it fights with it self,
 suffering for it self, dying by it self, and so it self sinking by death into its own
 sweetest bosom and dearest embraces, the fountain of Life, the center and circle
 of all Delights ... Thus Love it self, in the place of us all, most lovingly, and
 beauty it self, most beautifully is become a Sacrifice for itself to it self.²⁷

We can compare Sterry on the paradox of Christ's bloody sacrifice in the name of love and life with the ecstatic and erotic celebration of the union of the saved soul with Christ in Crashaw's 'On a Prayer Booke':

Amorous Languishments, Luminous trances,
 Sights which are not seen with eyes
 Spirituall and soule piercing glances.
 Whose pure and subtle lightening, flies
 Home to the heart, and setts the house on fire;
 And melts it downe in sweet desire:
 Yet doth not stay
 To aske the windows leave, to passe that way.
 Delicious deaths, soft exhalations

²⁵ The 'Directions' are printed in H. Fletcher (ed.), *The Intellectual Development of John Milton* (2 vols, Urbana, IL, 1961), 2, pp. 623–64. See the illuminating discussion in relation to Crashaw in Healy, *Richard Crashaw*, pp. 45–52.

²⁶ P. Collinson, entry for Holdsworth in the *ODNB*.

²⁷ Healy, *Richard Crashaw*, pp. 32–3; Peter Sterry, *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will* (London, 1675), p. 163.

Of soule; deare, and divine annihilations.
 A thousand unknowne rites
 Of joyes, and rarified delights (128–9).

Crashaw's rapturous invocation of the 'amorous Languishments' of the heart melted by 'sweet desire' for union with Christ and the 'delicious deaths' which the soul will experience in this union is initiated by reflection on the Prayer Book. Crashaw conceives of liturgical ritual and church ceremony as a means of continually re-enacting the events of the Passion. Equally Sterry describes the 'harmonious Contrariety' by which the eternal life of grace is infused into the sinful soul through the temporal shedding of Christ's blood as 'a mysterious Love-sport, or a Divine *Love-play*'. But Sterry also condemns the misplaced sensuality of those who identify the mystical marriage of man and Christ with sacramental ritual: 'Wanting that *bread of heaven*, that *new wine* of the Kingdom, the *beauties* and *sweetness* of GOD in the *Spirit*, which should feast the *inward* man; they entertain the *fancy*, and *senses*, with all objects sutable to them, with a pretence of subserviency to *devotion*, as in the *Temple* of old'. Crashaw, in imitation of Herbert, represented his lyrics as linguistic representations of liturgical forms, as verbal 'steps to the temple' of the parish church. For Sterry, who held a conventicle after the Restoration, the re-enactment of the Passion is an internalised bodily experience which has nothing to do with the aesthetic, sensual appeal of external objects (such as Peterhouse chapel): the Spirit 'gives forth his Oracles in his *Temples*, which are his *Saints*'.²⁸ Nevertheless the shared sense of assured grace leads both Sterry and Crashaw to celebrate the unity of the self with Christ in very similar language – a language with which it seems they were both familiar from the Counter-Reformation rhetorics that they studied in Caroline Cambridge.

Sterry attacked the Presbyterians for seeking to 'bind up the sweet influences of the Spirit' in 'legal' religion and misrepresent the Spirit's '*Impressions* upon the heart ... as *Enthusiasmes*'.²⁹ Although Healy cites Sterry simply as an example of a 'Puritan' writer, Sterry was in fact a proponent of free grace and religious toleration, although he did not systematically set out his theological views until after the Restoration. Richard Baxter (1615–91) categorised him as an 'enthusiast' and accused him of holding antinomian beliefs little different from those of the Ranters.³⁰ Sterry indeed accepted that the theology which he outlined fully in

²⁸ Peter Sterry, *England's Deliverance From the Northern Presbytery, compared With its Deliverance from the Roman Papacy: by Peter Sterry, Once fellow of Emmanuel Colledge in Cambridge, now Preacher to the Right Honorable the Councell of State, sitting at White-Hall* (London, 1652), pp. 18, 20. The fullest discussion of Sterry remains V. de Sola Pinto, *Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan, 1613–1672. A Biographical and Critical Study* (Cambridge, 1934).

²⁹ Sterry, *England's Deliverance*, pp. 8, 20.

³⁰ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianæ*, ed. M. Sylvester (London, 1696), pt i, pp. 74–8. On Sterry's version of free grace, see D.P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-*

Free Grace Exalted (1670) may seem ‘to confirm the *Ranters* in their *licentious Principles* and Practices’.³¹ Yet he maintained, like Saltmarsh and Tobias Crisp (1600–43), the pre-war cleric who sought to establish the doctrine of free grace on a respectable intellectual basis, that ‘all that have this freedom purchased by Christ for them, they have the power of God in them, which keeps them that they break not out licentiously’. Nonetheless Crisp’s language in his sermons, published after his death, could be as provocative as Saltmarsh’s: ‘To be called a libertine is the most glorious title under heaven; take it from one that is truly free by Christ ... If you be freemen of Christ, you may esteem the curse of the law as no more concerning you than the laws of England concern Spain’.³²

Sterry was associated by his enemies with antinomian radicals, although the exact nature of the association remains ambiguous. He attached a refutation of ‘practical’ antinomianism, before the term ‘Ranter’ was common currency, to the published version of his sermon on 1 November 1649, celebrating Cromwell’s return from Ireland. This has been described as the ‘first intellectually structured presentation of Ranter doctrine not based on gossip and hearsay’, in which Sterry uses ‘Ranter terminology and allegorical imagery’. Opinion is divided over whether Sterry was trying to ‘disengage’ himself from these more extreme religious radicals or whether he was their lifelong opponent.³³ Lawrence Clarkson (1615–67) recorded preaching ‘some while’ at ‘Mr *Sterry*’s place’ at ‘*Bowe*’ in London (probably St Mary-le-Bow) around 1647, a period in which Clarkson ‘had a high pitch of free Grace’ from reading Crisp’s sermons.³⁴ Sterry may even have

Century Discussions of Eternal Torment (London, 1964), pp. 104–5, 119. Walker makes illuminating comparisons with the theology of Richard Coppin, for whose *Divine Teachings* (London, 1649) Abiezer Coppe wrote a preface. On Sterry’s tolerationism, see de Sola Pinto, *Peter Sterry*, pp. 19–20.

³¹ Sterry, *Discourse of the Freedom of the Will*, p. 156.

³² Tobias Crisp, *Christ alone exalted in fourteene Sermons preached in, and neare London, by the late Reverend Tobias Crispe Doctor in Divinity, and faithfull Pastor of Brinkworth in Wiltshire. As they were taken from his owne mouth in shortwriting, whereof severall Copies were diligently compared together, and with his owne Notes. And published for the satisfaction and comfort of Gods people*, ed. Roger Lancaster (London, 1643), pp. 194, 196, 210; Tobias Crisp, *Christ alone exalted In the Perfection and Encouragements of the Saints, notwithstanding Sins and Trialls. Being laid open in severall sermons. By the late spirituall and faithfull Preacher of the Gospell, Tobias Crispe, D.D.* (London, 1648), pp. 87, 156–57. On Crisp’s theology, see most recently D. Parnham, ‘The Humbling of “High Presumption”: Tobias Crisp Dismantles the Puritan Ordo Salutis’, *JEH*, 56 (2005): pp. 50–74; D. Parnham, ‘The Covenantal Quietism of Tobias Crisp’, *CH*, 75 (2006): pp. 511–43.

³³ Peter Sterry, *The Commings Forth of Christ* (London, 1650), ‘The Epistle Dedicatory’; N.I. Matar, ‘Peter Sterry and the Ranters’, *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 29 (1982): pp. 504–06; C. Hill, *A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical Politics, Religion and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London, 1990; 1993), pp. 189–90.

³⁴ Lawrence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found* (London, 1660), pp. 9, 23.

known the young Abiezer Coppe in Warwickshire. Sterry left Emmanuel in 1638 to become chaplain to Lord Brooke. Dugard's diary records his frequent lunching with Brooke at Warwick Castle, with Sterry sometimes in attendance. Coppe had left Warwick for Oxford in 1636 but had returned with the outbreak of the war; it appears that on his return Dugard used his influence to secure patronage for Coppe, who preached two Sunday sermons and five lectures in Warwick in 1641 despite not being ordained or even having completed his degree.³⁵ Dugard's diary raises the possibility that Coppe met Sterry through Dugard when both Coppe and Sterry were preaching in Warwick in 1640–41. Combined with Clarkson's reference, this suggests that Sterry may have been involved in the 1640s with figures later called Ranters, whom Sterry was quick to denounce as he became more closely linked to Cromwell, or as their views became more extreme.

This brings us back, then, to a post-prandial Dugard and Coppe, teacher and pupil, reading Crashaw's Latin epigrams in Warwick in 1634. Recognition of the common language and images of assured grace in Crashaw, Saltmarsh and Sterry and the academic origins of aspects of that language in neo-Latin devotional poetics can shed light on the startlingly physical and sexual imagery of Coppe's prose. One of the most striking and provocative moments in *A Fiery Flying Roll* (1649), for which Coppe was imprisoned and which seems to have helped bring the 1650 Blasphemy Act into existence, begins with Coppe's acknowledgement that 'Kisses are numbered amongst transgressors – base things – well!' The exclamatory 'well!' is often used by Coppe to suggest a parody of pulpit rhetoric. He goes on to insist that by 'wanton kisses, kissing hath been confounded; and externall kisses, have been made by the fiery chariots, to mount me swiftly into the bosom of him whom my soul loves, [his excellent Majesty, the King of glory]'. As 'beauty is the father of lust or love', Coppe admits to having 'gone along the streets impregnant with that child [lust] which a particular beauty had begot'. Christopher Hill quotes these lines in his chapter in *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972) on the sexual freedom released by the breakdown of religious and social order during the 1640s. Taking his lead from Norman Cohn's discussion of the Ranters in *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957), Hill suggests that Coppe's language here reveals that the practice of free love by the Ranters was not a purely polemical fiction.³⁶

³⁵ For Coppe's preaching in 1641, see BL, Add. MS 23,146, fols 93r, 97r; on Dugard's meetings with Sterry, see fols 77r–v, 81v, 95v. For Coppe's biography, see McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *The Seventeenth Century*, 12 (1997): pp. 173–205; McDowell, *English Radical Imagination*, pp. 89–95; A. Hessayon, 'Abiezer Coppe' in the *ODNB*; A. Hessayon, 'The Making of Abiezer Coppe', *JEH*, 62 (2011): pp. 38–58.

³⁶ N. Smith (ed.), *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1983), p. 108; C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 253–60; N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the*

Yet Crashaw expresses the assurance of grace and the ecstatic experience of union with Christ in the overtly erotic language of ‘Amorous languishments’, ‘Delicious deaths’, ‘divine embraces’ and ‘immortall kisses’. Christ, as bridegroom to the bride of the redeemed soul, is the ‘spouse of Virgins’. Crashaw derives such bodily and erotic imagery from his study of patristic and Counter-Reformation commentaries on Canticles. The most disturbing of Crashaw’s epigrams for modern readers (and the most frequently anthologised) is ‘Blessed be the paps that thou hast sucked’:

Suppose he had been Tabled at thy Teates,
 Thy hunger feels not what he eates:
 Hee’l have his Teat e’re long (a bloody one)
 Thy Mother then must suck the Son. (94)

Healy points out that Crashaw’s imagery here is likely under the influence of St Bernard’s sermons on Canticles. Mary, as a personification of the ‘Mother Church’, is identified as both mother and bride of Christ the bridegroom, whose bleeding nipples on the Cross are ‘portrayed as a type of unending sweetness where the bridegroom helps to satisfy the high desires he has created in his bride’. St Bernard also provided religious radicals with a language in which to express their experience of free grace. John Rogers (b. 1627), the Independent minister and later Fifth Monarchist, who in 1653 was imprisoned on the Isle of Wight by Cromwell, includes Saltmarsh’s *Free-Grace* and St Bernard on Canticles (as well as Tobias Crisp’s sermons) in his recommended reading for saints who have experienced ‘warne tenders of the blood of Christ, lively openings of a crucified Christ, which melt their souls’. Rogers, who attended King’s College, Cambridge, in the early 1640s, celebrates the ‘soule-raptures’ and ‘love songs’ of the soul in a state of grace as ‘a new *Canticles*’, citing St Bernard:

Such sweet *souls*, humble *Saints*, sayes *Bernard*, are like the *violets*, which *grow low* and hang their *heads downward*, but are full of *excellency* and *vertue*. The *grass* on the *house-top*, and the fine *July-flower* on the *wall* will soon lose their lustre, and *wither* away, but the *violets* ... hold longer and livelier and *smell sweeter*.³⁷

It is less surprising that figures such as Saltmarsh and Rogers might have recalled patristic commentaries and post-Tridentine Catholic lessons in sacred eloquence to convey their experience of free grace when we remember that the ‘emphasis upon direct divine inspiration put [radical religious writers] in the same position

Millennium (London, 1957), pp. 364–71. On the influence of the 1960s ‘sexual revolution’ on Hill’s interpretation of the 1640s, see Hessayon, ‘Fabricating radical traditions’: 1–6.

³⁷ Healy, *Richard Crashaw*, p. 21; John Rogers, *הלל Ohel or Beth-Shemesh. A Tabernacle for the Sun: or Irenicum Evangelicum* (London, 1653), pp. 361, 380.

as Catholic spiritual writers'.³⁸ Rogers believed that all the conversion experiences of his gathered Church in Dublin that he collected in 1653 exemplified the process of progressive illumination through 'annihilation' of reason and the will outlined by the Catholic mystic Benet of Canfield. Rogers read Canfield's late sixteenth-century treatise *A Bright Starre, Leading to, & Centering in, Christ our perfection* in the 1646 translation (from either Latin or French) by the Oxford graduate Giles Randall, alleged to be a leading London antinomian and 'Famelist' by Rutherford and Thomas Edwards.³⁹ *A Bright Starre* 'recommends an extreme form of *unio mystica* based upon Bernard and the *via negativa* of Pseudo-Dionysius'. The influence of Bernard's interpretation of Canticles is evident in the sexualised imagery in which the process of self-annihilation is expressed:

[The soul] opens her selfe, and entertaines this Being, not as a vessell receives what it holds, but as the Moon does the shine of the Sun. Here she throws abroad her white and Lilly armes, to fold and close-inchaine her Lover, but much closer is shee embrac't and inchained by him.⁴⁰

The Song of Songs acts as a recurring refrain throughout Coppe's prose.⁴¹ In *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine* (1649) the ecstatic celebration of the internalised apocalypse, of the resurrection of Christ within the perfected saint, is expressed in the language of Canticles: 'The day *star* is up, rise up my *love*, my *dove*, my faire one, and *come away*. The day *star* wooeth you. It is the voice of my beloved that saith open to me – I am *risen indeed*, rise up my love, open to me my faire one.'⁴² As we have seen, in Bernard's interpretation Mary is both the virgin mother of Christ and the bride of Christ, the bridegroom in the Song of Songs. In *Sancta Maria Dolorum*, Crashaw envisages Mary as drinking the blood/wine of Christ on the Cross, which is identified with the palm tree of Canticles 7: 7–8: 'This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine'. Crashaw desires to follow Mary in 'sucking' at the 'vine' of Christ's bloody wounds:

O teach mine too the art
To study him so, till we mix
Wounds; and become one crucifix.

³⁸ Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p. 17.

³⁹ Rogers, *Ohel or Beth-Shemesh*, p. 382; Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* (London, 1647), part i, p. 167, Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (3 parts, 1646), 3, p. 25.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p. 39; Benet of Canfield, *A Bright Starre, Leading to, & Centering in, Christ our perfection*, trans. Giles Randall (London, 1646), pp. 61–2.

⁴¹ For extended if somewhat predictable discussion, see Noam Flinker, *The 'Song of Songs' in English Renaissance Literature: Kisses of Their Mouths* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 120–39.

⁴² Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 52.

O let me suck the wine
 So long of his chaste vine
 Till drunk of the dear wounds, I be
 A lost Thing to the world, as it to me. (287)

Having drunk of the spiritual wine of free grace, Coppe represents himself as a type of both Mary the bride and Mary the virgin mother, giving birth to the internally resurrected Christ:

*The Lord is risen indeed: I see him, not only risen out of Josephs Tombe, without me, but risen out of the bowells of the earth within me, and is alive in me, formed in me, grows in me: The Babe springs in my inmost wombe, leaps for joy there, and then I sing, and never but then, O Lord my song! To me a childe is borne, a son is given, who lives in me, O Immanuel!*⁴³

In the passage in *A Fiery Flying Roll* quoted by Hill as evidence of the sexually libertine practices of the Ranters, Coppe alludes to Canticles 7:9 in the midst of proclaiming that ‘base things so called’ have confounded ‘fleshly holinesse’: ‘I have been hug’d, imbrac’t, and kist with the kisses of his mouth, whose loves are better then wine, and have been utterly overcome therewith’. The ‘beauty’ which begot his ‘lust’ is ‘my spouse, my love, my dove, my fair one’.⁴⁴ It is anachronistic to assume that such erotic religious language necessarily had any basis in actual behaviour or was part of a popular subculture of sexual freedom. Sterry’s reading has been called ‘oceanic’ and his library list of 1663 contains a range of patristic, mystical and Neoplatonic authors, including Pseudo-Dionysius, Plotinus, Origen and Bernard. In the sermon which he preached at Westminster as a thanksgiving for the defeat of the Royalist and Scottish forces at Worcester in September 1651, he compared the relationship between Christ and his saints in the sexualised terms which he would have found in writers such as Bernard: ‘*The Lord JESUS hath his Concubines, his Queens, his Virgins; Saints in Remoter Forms, Saints in Higher Forms, Saints unmarried to any Form, who keep themselves single for the immediate embraces of their Love*’.⁴⁵

The image of Coppe as pregnant with lust for the beauty of Christ may be shocking, but no more so than Donne’s desperate plea to be ravished by the Holy Spirit in his ferocious sonnet ‘Batter my heart, three person’d God’. Donne’s Calvinist desperation in this sonnet, his sense of being ‘betrothed’ unto sin, is a consequence of the lack of external assurance which the Laudian and later Catholic Crashaw found in the liturgical ceremony of the Church and which

⁴³ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 109.

⁴⁵ For Sterry’s reading, see de Sola Pinto, *Peter Sterry*, pp. 57–8; Sterry, *England’s Deliverance*, p. 6.

Saltmarsh and Coppe found in the inner revelation of free grace.⁴⁶ Yet Donne's residually Catholic poetic sensibility still represents the sinner's (dysfunctional) relationship with the divine in terms of the sexualised allegory of Canticles: it is this clash between Counter-Reformation imagery and Calvinist doctrine that gives the sonnet its disturbing, violent energy. Coppe expresses his spiritual rapture in sexual imagery both to emphasise the physicality of the experience of in-dwelling and to subvert linguistically the moral categories of the Puritan clergy. Kisses and lust, which the clergy reflexively condemn as 'base things', are (spiritually) the 'base' from which the saint ascends to union with Christ. This apparent paradox echoes the fundamental Christian paradox of the payment of man's sin by Christ's freely given sacrifice, as described by Sterry: 'Thus love of it self, in the place of us all, most lovingly, and beauty it self most beautifully is become a Sacrifice for itself to it self'.⁴⁷ Or as Crashaw puts it in *Charitas Nimia*:

If my base lust
Bargain'd with Death and well-beseeming dust

Why should the white
Lamb's bosom write
The purple name
Of my sin's shame?

Why should this unstained brest make good
My blushes with his own heart-blood? (281–2)

Coppe may have encountered at Oxford the patristic commentaries and post-Tridentine Catholic works on sacred eloquence which Crashaw, Saltmarsh and Sterry studied at Cambridge; Coppe went up in 1636, the year in which the Laudian code, which placed increased emphasis on the study of patristic theology, came into force.⁴⁸ It is also tempting to speculate that Coppe's reading of Crashaw's Latin epigrams in the 1630s had a residual influence on the radical prose of the late 1640s. The surprising intellectual and literary connections that can be made between Crashaw and Saltmarsh, Sterry and Coppe should serve to make us reflect on the relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the early modern period. Scholars have started to recognize in recent years that this relationship is always symbiotic, never starkly oppositional, or simply equivalent to the dichotomy of elite

⁴⁶ On the Calvinist despair of Donne's sonnets, see J. Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991).

⁴⁷ Sterry, *Discourse of the Freedom of the Will*, p. 163.

⁴⁸ See the interesting comments on the Laudian code in P. Allen, 'Scientific Studies in the English Universities of the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10 (1949): p. 221.

and popular.⁴⁹ Post-Tridentine Catholic eloquence was part of orthodox academic culture, and even, it seems, orthodox Puritan culture, in early Stuart England; at the same time it provided the linguistic resources not only for an anti-Calvinist Laudian poetics, as might be expected, but for the expression of an antinomian theology that extended Calvinist doctrine to its logical, if heretical, conclusions.

⁴⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, 'Within the Margins: the Definitions of Orthodoxy', in R.D. Lund (ed.), *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing and Cultural Response, 1660–1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 33–53. For the need to recognise that the relationship between 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy' in pre-war England, whether in terms of religious organisation or intellectual exchange, is dynamic and symbiotic rather than static and oppositional, see also P. Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001); Como, *Blown by the Spirit*. See also the essays in A. Hessayon and N. Keene (eds), *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2006), in particular N. McDowell, 'The Ghost in the Marble: Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* (1647) and its Readers', pp. 176–91.



Chapter 2

Radicalism Relocated: Royalist Politics and Pamphleteering of the Late 1640s

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This paper argues that what constituted early modern radicalism was intrinsically conditioned by factors relating to time, place, author and context, as well as literary form. What was mundane in one moment and one medium could be dangerous at another time and in a different context, and vice versa. The central focus will be provided by an analysis of Royalist newspapers and pamphlets of the later 1640s, which challenge conventional notions regarding the nature of radical political thought and tactics after the end of the First Civil War in 1646. It argues that in the particular circumstances of the late 1640s – namely growing tension regarding the nature of the political settlement, growing assertiveness on the part of the New Model Army, and what appeared to be a permanent Parliament – Royalists were prepared to develop new ideas and new political tactics in order to undermine their enemies. These centred upon ideas regarding political accountability and the relationship between representatives and the public, as well as broader issues regarding constitutional structures and arrangements. The traces of such ideas can be found in the writings of Royalist grandees such as Sir Roger Twysden, as well as in the more ephemeral literature produced by journalists and political pamphleteers. Radical ideas, in other words, proved capable of migrating into unexpected areas of the political nation, and across the political spectrum. Ultimately, it will be possible to draw attention to particular works from among the huge range of anonymous and popular political pamphlets of the late 1640s which defy easy categorisation in terms of royalism and Parliamentarianism, and to suggest that late 1640s ‘radicalism’ became a phenomenon in some ways distinct from, and capable of breaking down the barriers between, such political affiliations.

Historians are now familiar with historiographical problems concerning Civil War radicalism. One of these relates to linguistics.¹ On 19 November 1640, for example, during a debate on the disputed Long Parliament election at Great Marlow

¹ C. Condren, ‘Radicals, Conservatives and Moderates in early modern political thought: a case of Sandwich Islands syndrome’, *History of Political Thought*, 10 (1989): pp. 526–33; C. Condren, *The Politics of Language in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1994), ch. 5.

in Buckinghamshire, it was the diarist Sir Simonds D'Ewes who expressed – or claimed to have expressed – his opinion that ‘the poorest man ought to have a voice; that it was the birthright of the subjects of England’.² This often overlooked statement, uttered as it was by an MP not noted for his ‘radicalism’, and who indeed is somewhat renowned for his attacks upon ‘fiery spirits’ such as John Pym, is of considerable interest. D'Ewes's speech was made nearly seven years before one of the most quoted lines in the canon of Civil War radicalism, from Thomas Rainborowe's speech at Putney:

the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he; and therefore truly, sir, I think it's clear, that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government; and ... I should doubt whether he was an Englishman or no that should doubt of these things.³

Without wishing to claim that Rainborowe meant nothing more radical than did D'Ewes, it is evident from the fact that these two men clearly did not see eye-to-eye on the franchise that phrases such as Rainborowe's ‘the poorest he’, and words such as ‘birthright’ do not necessarily and intrinsically signify ‘radicalism’. It is too easy, in other words, to merely assume that such words and phrases ought to be interpreted as evidence of ‘progressive’ thought.

Another problem with radicalism concerns those aspects of Civil War ‘radicalism’ which are apt to be downplayed, or even explained away, because they sit uneasily with historians' preconceptions regarding ‘progressive’ thought. This idea has generally been pursued in order to demonstrate the tendency of Marxist historians, when interpreting individuals such as Gerrard Winstanley and John Warr, to ignore religious views and accentuate secular radicalism. Attempts have been made, therefore, to expose this selective privileging of modern elements of seventeenth-century thought.⁴

Together, these problems undermine what Glenn Burgess calls the ‘substantive’ approach to radicalism; the idea that there is ‘a continuous radical tradition of definable identity’. They suggest instead the need for a somewhat relativised and contextualised understanding of radicalism, which is recognised as being fundamentally ‘functional’ and ‘situational’ in nature. Ideas and policies can be characterised as ‘radical’, therefore, according to the way in which they were

² W. Notestein (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (New Haven, 1923), p. 43; *Commons Journal* [hereafter *CJ*], ii, 31a.

³ *The Clarke Papers. Selections from the papers of William Clarke, Secretary to the Council of the Army, 1647–1649, and to General Monck and the commanders of the army in Scotland, 1651–1660*, ed. C.H. Firth (Camden Society, n.s. 49, 1891), 1, p. 301.

⁴ J.C. Davis, ‘Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660’, *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): pp. 193–213; L. Mulligan, J. Graham and J. Richards, ‘Winstanley: a case for the man as he said he was’, *JEH*, 28 (1977): pp. 57–75.

deployed in their own time, and in terms of their local aims and targets.⁵ Radicals, in other words, could merely be those delegitimising the status quo, and envisaging a ‘transfer mechanism capable of bringing about the desired transformation’.⁶ This means that what is ‘radical’ changes over time and in different contexts, without of course necessarily implying that earlier expressions of particular ideas are necessarily more radical than later incarnations. It also means that particular political actors and authors can be characterised with the label ‘radical’ only in relation to particular political circumstances and situations, and that both individuals and ideas could cease to be ‘radical’ fairly quickly. Lastly, it opens up the possibility that genuine radicalism can be found in unexpected places, and in the policies and pamphlets of those previously excluded from the radical pantheon.

The implications of such attempts to rethink and relocate radicalism naturally relate to ‘conservatism’ equally well. This is increasingly recognised by historians of the Reformation, and Michael Mendle has recently sought to recover the ‘royalism’ of Levellers and other ‘radicals’ – notably those authors whose works were printed on the presses of John Harris and Henry Hills in 1647 – and to show how this too has been downplayed in twentieth-century historiography.⁷ Mendle’s piece, together with recent methodological insights, serves to underpin and inspire what follows in this piece, which in many ways represents an attempt to confirm Mendle’s conclusions by exploring the other side of his Leveller–Royalist axis, and to relocate radicalism through a contextual analysis of previously neglected sources.

The key to understanding the alliance between a Leveller like John Wildman and a Royalist like Sir John Maynard in the spring of 1648 is, as Mendle recognises, the political experience of the 1640s. This is not as simplistic a statement as it might appear, because much of the historiography of Civil War radicalism has been too eager to extrapolate radical principles from apparently ‘radical’ statements, and because ‘radicals’ such as the Levellers have tended to be studied in a degree of isolation from their contemporaries, and in an insufficiently contextualised fashion. By shifting the focus away from the more abstract aspects of radical thought – birthrights, natural rights and, to a lesser extent, constitutional models – towards an exploration of their perceptions of Parliament in the 1640s, as well as their recommendations regarding parliamentary practice, it is possible to

⁵ Burgess, ‘Matter of Context’, 1–3; Burgess, ‘Radicalism and the English Revolution’, p. 67.

⁶ J.C. Davis, ‘Afterword: reassessing radicalism in a traditional society: two questions’, in G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 340.

⁷ E. Shagan, ‘Rumours and popular politics’, in T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 56; M. Mendle, ‘Putney’s pronouns. Identity and indemnity in the great debate’, in M. Mendle (ed.), *The Putney Debates of 1647* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 125–47; Burgess, ‘Radicalism and the English Revolution’, pp. 72–3.

gain a deeper understanding of what groups such as the Levellers believed.⁸ In the process, however, it will also be possible to contextualise them more thoroughly in terms of the ideas of their contemporaries, and the result will hopefully be a clearer idea about what is, and is not, constitutive of Civil War radicalism.

In the same way that Mendle has drawn attention to the Royalism of key ‘radical’ tracts from the late 1640s it is also possible to explore the ‘radicalism’ contained within the pamphlets which emerged from the pens of Royalist or crypto-Royalist authors during the same period. It is possible to show, for example, that Nedham’s development of interest theory could serve Royalist as well as parliamentary ends, as one of his key parliamentary tracts was republished as a Royalist pamphlet in 1647.⁹ But more importantly, it is also possible to show that detailed scrutiny of ‘conservative’ pamphlets and newspapers from the second half of the 1640s reveals that Sir John Maynard’s alliance with the ‘radical’ press, in defence of John Lilburne, was far from unique.

One of the most important, and often most neglected, ways of understanding Civil War radicals is by examining their perceptions of parliamentary politics – institutionally and procedurally – in the 1640s.¹⁰ Scrutiny of contemporary commentators upon Civil War politics reveals that Westminster was recognised as being riven by factionalism, and that this could be analysed in terms of the internal structures and relationships of such groups. Analysis of political factions at Westminster revealed, therefore, that sophisticated parliamentary tactics had become the tools of such interest groups, and were intrinsically important to factional politics. Commentators recognised the need to look behind the scenes and beyond the two Houses, and to explore financial and administrative management in order to appreciate the extent to which conventional procedures had fallen prey to factional power, as well as the identity of those who bore most responsibility for such developments.¹¹

The texts of ‘radical’ writers reveal, in other words, the extent to which their disillusionment was informed not so much by abstract theorising as by observing parliamentary procedures and parliamentary practice; not so much by particular

⁸ J. Peacey, ‘The people of the Agreement: the Levellers, civil war radicalism and political participation’, in P. Baker and E. Vernon (eds), *The Foundations of Freedom: The Agreements of the People, the Levellers, and the Constitutional Crisis of the English Revolution, c.1647–1660* (Basingstoke, forthcoming).

⁹ Peacey, *Gerrard Politicians and Pamphleteers. Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 281.

¹⁰ Davis, ‘Afterword’, p. 341.

¹¹ J. Peacey, ‘Perceptions of Parliament: factions and “The Public”’, in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War. Conflicts and Contexts, 1640–49* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 82–105.

policies as by a sense of the systemic abuse of power.¹² Although radicals naturally focused their criticism upon the upper House, they eventually extended their analysis much further in order to suggest that ‘subtle practices’ also entailed a betrayal of trust by MPs, and required that they should be ‘called to account’.¹³ Financial impropriety prompted John Wildman to ask, therefore, ‘to what purpose should the strength of the ploughman be spent in sowing the field, whose tender fruit is always blasted in the blossom’, and to inquire ‘wherefore should the people trifle away their precious time in tedious toilsome journeys to elections, to send the worthies of their country?’¹⁴ Cheney Culpeper, meanwhile, advocated ‘the purging of our great committees’, and both George Wither and John Musgrave defended the public’s right to submit accusations against particular members. Betrayal of trust, therefore, was felt to justify the attempt to institute quasi-judicial proceedings against MPs, and this liberty to prosecute members was regarded as providing an important bulwark against arbitrary government.¹⁵ Army apologists thus annoyed Independent grandees by legitimising the impeachment of the eleven Presbyterian MPs in June 1647, on the grounds that people were ‘experimentally conscious of some members [being] guilty of gross crimes’, and of advancing their own ends, as well as those of their factions.¹⁶

Factionalism and financial impropriety, however, also provides the key to understanding the most sophisticated responses to emerge from ‘conservative’ authors such as Clement Walker and William Prynne, as well as the radicalism of a number of Royalist or crypto-Royalist pamphlets during the same period. Like those more conventionally regarded as ‘radicals’, these writers damned factionalism while advocating a return to traditional financial institutions, and government by the three estates.¹⁷ Moreover, it was Edward Massey’s ‘reformado’ soldiers who threatened tumults at Westminster in January 1647, having berated ‘the liberal gifts of the Parliament to their own members’. These ‘gifts’ were apparently

¹² *A Publike Declaration and Solemne Protestation* (London, 1648), p. 5.

¹³ John Lilburne, *A Whip for the Present House of Lords* (London, 1648); *An Alarum to the House of Lords*, p. 9; John Lilburne, *Englands Birthright Justified* (London, 1645), p. 33; *The Journal of Thomas Juxon*, ed. D. Scott and K. Lindley (Camden Society, 5th series, 13, 1999), p. 104.

¹⁴ John Wildman, *Putney Projects* (London, 1647), p. 32.

¹⁵ ‘The letters of Sir Cheney Culpeper, 1641–1657’, ed. M.J. Braddick and M. Greengrass, in *Camden Miscellany XXIII* (Camden Society, 5th series, 7, 1996), p. 231; George Wither, *Justitiarius* (London, 1646), p. 14; John Musgrave, *Another Word to the Wise* (London, 1646); John Musgrave, *A Fourth Word to the Wise* (London, 1647), p. 8; *Journal of Thomas Juxon*, pp. 104–5; *Reasons Why the House of Commons Ought ... to Suspend the Members* (London, 1647), p. 4.

¹⁶ *A Moderate Answer to a Late Printed Pamphlet Intituled Nine Queries* (London, 1647), p. 4; *Journal of Thomas Juxon*, pp. 157–8.

¹⁷ *An Eye-Salve for the Armie* (London, 1647), sigs. Av, A4; Clement Walker, *Relations and Observations* (London, 1648), sig. B, pp. 4, 6–7, 9, 12, 16, 17, 50, 58, 115–16.

‘much spoken of among the people, who say surely the Parliament is dying in that they distribute their legacies so fast’.¹⁸ Likewise, it was a Presbyterian who claimed that ‘the people ... expect a more exact account and ample satisfaction than they have yet had, for their profuse expense of wealth and blood’.¹⁹ However, the importance of such texts and such ideas lies not merely in Presbyterian and crypto-Royalist diagnosis of the disease within Westminster politics, but also in the cures which such authors were provoked to advocate, since these solutions can be shown to have borne remarkable similarities to those outlined by writers more conventionally regarded as ‘radicals’.

In part, the ‘radicalism’ of Royalist and crypto-Royalist commentators was tacit and pragmatic. Condren has described this as ‘an extremity casuistry of conservation’, according to which ‘in extremis you may innovate to conserve’. This is the radicalism of the excluded and the alienated.²⁰ In order to discredit parliamentary leaders, therefore, the *modus operandi* of many such authors conflicted with their determination that, in an ideal world, MPs ought not be questioned or held to account for their ‘demeanour within those walls’.²¹ Their attempts to discredit Parliamentarians, in other words, involved breaking down the secrecy which they apparently prized so highly, and created a conflict with an otherwise dogged attachment to the *arcana imperii*. It is this paradox which explains the need to reconsider late 1640s ‘conservatives’. In part, this means recognising their willingness to draw attention to detailed evidence regarding parliamentary financial arrangements, not least by cataloguing the offices held by particular MPs, and the pensions and salaries which they received. More importantly, it means recognising their tendency to expose to public view evidence regarding parliamentary debates.

The secrecy of parliamentary proceedings – particularly debates – was traditionally guarded most closely, and opposition to the reporting of debates was a key principle of early Stuart politics. What is interesting, therefore, about Royalist propaganda during the 1640s is the extent to which such principles were laid aside, and the way in which pioneering Royalist news books penetrated the veil of secrecy with which parliamentary proceedings were conventionally covered. At the most basic level, Royalist newspapers provided readers with details regarding the membership of committees, at least in terms of the most important appointments and the most powerful bodies, and analysed the factional

¹⁸ Bodl., MS Clarendon 29, fol. 72r–v.

¹⁹ *A Warning for all the Counties* (London, 1647), pp. 4–5; *Journal of Thomas Juxon*, p. 149.

²⁰ Condren, ‘Afterword: radicalism revisited’, in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 317, 320.

²¹ *The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England* (24 vols, 1761–63), 16, p. 156; Walker, *Relations*, p. 139.

nature of nominations, and changes to such bodies. Editors also scrutinised patterns of attendance and absence from either House, and could occasionally name the entire list of those present in the Lords. As the House of Commons grew 'thin' in late 1648, moreover, some journalists evidently felt justified in demonstrating who was, and who was not, present.

Ultimately, some Royalist newspapers went much further, by describing motions made in the Commons by individual MPs, and outlining the sense of debates, as well as providing direct quotations from both the Commons and the Lords. Although this sensitive area was one into which authors and editors strayed only tentatively and infrequently in the early 1640s, such tactics clearly infuriated Parliamentarians at Westminster, and their frustration only grew as such tactics became more common later in the decade. Editors in the late 1640s displayed far less reticence about identifying authors of particular motions, and about providing readers with a sense of the nature of debates in either House.

Royalist behaviour amounted, therefore, to a practical embracing of 'open government', and a tacit admission that the availability of such information would foster genuine public debate. Indeed, such reporting might even be argued to have represented a 'functional radicalisation' of the relationship between Parliament and the people, by promoting political accountability, and the individual responsibility of MPs. Key Royalist editors provided the public with startling evidence regarding the attitudes and financial circumstances of individual MPs, and as the Restoration approached in early 1660, readers and electors were encouraged to hold such members to account for their performance, not least by refusing to elect them to Parliament again.²²

It is, of course, important to recognise that Royalist tactics, particularly the reporting of parliamentary debates, tended to represent nothing more than a pragmatic, rather than a principled, attitude towards 'the public', and only fleeting support for a realm of public debate, provoked by an overwhelming desire to undermine their parliamentary enemies. However, there is at least some evidence that certain Royalists became much more explicitly 'radical' in their response to parliamentary government, and that their arguments became much more sophisticated. Royalists participated, in other words, in a trend which began in 1645, and which saw calls for the removal of MPs who neglected their duties, and indeed for a wholesale purge, or even dissolution, of Parliament, in order to reclaim power which had merely been entrusted to representatives.²³ Such language can be

²² J. Peacey, 'Royalist news, parliamentary debates, and political accountability, 1640–1660', *Parliamentary History*, 26 (2007): pp. 328–45.

²³ Wildman, *Putney*, sig. F4v; *Englands Lamentable Slaverie* (London, 1645), pp. 6–7; *Warning for all the Counties*, pp. 4, 8, 10; Thomas Harbye, *The Nations Claim of Native Right* (London, 1650), pp. 18–20. Similar ideas had been expressed in response to material grievances since before the war, but those who made such claims in the later 1640s tended to do so on the back of analysis of parliamentary practice: Lilburne, *Englands Birthright*, p. 33; Surrey History Centre, G85/5/2/10a.

shown to have been deployed across the political spectrum, including by supporters of the Surrey petition in May 1648, who warned that ‘we will have a new Parliament ... we will have an account of all the monies that we have paid’.²⁴ One crypto-Royalist tract from 1647 claimed that MPs who went beyond their trust could be held accountable, that electors could ‘recall them back again as often as they please and send others more honest, diligent, and better qualified’, and that such malefactors ought to be punished by fines, imprisonment, and even death.²⁵

More important still was the way in which disillusionment with parliamentary practice provoked some Royalists, as it did the Levellers, to demand reform of the representative system.²⁶ It is now well known that parliamentary radicals began to demand annual or even biannual Parliaments, in order to prevent ‘faction, oppression, partiality, and injustice’, and to advocate electoral reform, as a means of thwarting ‘all court craft, and faction, avarice and ambition’.²⁷ John Lilburne, therefore, demanded frequent elections explicitly in order to remove those whose performance in Parliament was found wanting.²⁸ What is rather less well known, however, is that such demands were echoed by quasi-Royalist commentators. One pamphleteer in 1647 demanded the enforcement of a sizeable quorum as well as greater publicity and openness regarding parliamentary proceedings and individual members’ contributions to debates. This author also advocated the creation of a public registry of members’ votes, so that ‘each county, corporation or any particular man may see how they behave themselves upon all occasions’.²⁹

The problem with such tracts, of course, centres upon uncertainty regarding their authorship and the Royalist credentials of those responsible for their appearance. Nevertheless, it is an interesting historical parlour game with some pamphlets to try and establish whether they ought to be labelled as ‘radical’ or ‘Royalist’, and the very fact that certain tracts from the late 1640s resist easy designation is surely significant. What is necessary in the light of such uncertainty, and for those who dislike parlour games, is evidence that ‘radical’ views emanated from known Royalists, and the remainder of this paper will be devoted to exploring the views of just such a man, the Kentish cavalier Sir Roger Twysden.

²⁴ *A True Relation of the Passages Between the Surrey Petitioners* (London, 1648), p. 2; Harbye, *Nations Claim*, p. 17.

²⁵ *Certain Queries Lovingly Propounded to Mr William Prynne* (London, 1647), p. 2.

²⁶ M. Kishlansky, ‘Ideology and politics in the parliamentary armies, 1645–9’, in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642–1649* (Basingstoke, 1982), p. 176.

²⁷ Musgrave, *Fourth Word*, pp. 11–12; Lilburne, *Englands Birthright*, p. 33; *Independency Stript and Whipt* (London, 1648), p. 14; Harbye, *Nations Claim*, p. 71.

²⁸ Lilburne, *Englands Birthright*, p. 33; *Certain Queries*, p. 3.

²⁹ Lilburne, *Englands Birthright*, p. 33; *Certain Queries*, p. 3.

Sir Roger Twysden (1597–1672) of Roydon Hall in East Peckham, Kent, was the scion of an ancient, albeit somewhat impoverished, Kentish family, who had represented Winchelsea in the 1620s, and whose life during the 1630s had been divided between zealous service as a justice of the peace,³⁰ and historical scholarship, the latter of which was reflected in the acquisition of ancient manuscripts, as well as in extensive reading and note-taking.³¹ That Twysden grew uneasy regarding Caroline financial policies is clear from his annotated copy of John Cowell's *The Interpreter, or Booke Containing the Signification of Words* (1607),³² and from his interest in Ship Money, not merely in terms of following Hampden's trial, but also in terms of denying the royal claim of 'necessity' and defending a parliamentary response to emergencies.³³ Nevertheless, Twysden represented Kent in the Short Parliament of 1640, as a variety of 'constitutional royalist', and if he was out of step with Caroline political and financial policies, he was nevertheless tolerant of Laudian reforms, and opposed to 'further reformation' beyond his beloved Elizabethan settlement.³⁴ Although not exactly a court candidate in the county election, therefore, he was clearly opposed to Sir Edward Dering, the supposed candidate of local Puritans, in what became a controversial episode.³⁵

A rather inactive MP, Twysden nevertheless supported the calling of the Long Parliament and the aims of the reformers in its opening months.³⁶ According to his

³⁰ Centre for Kentish Studies [hereafter CKS], U951/O7/18; U47/47/Z2, pp. 115–18; U47/47/O1, pp. 1–5, 13–15; U47/47/Z1, pp. 11–12, 43–4, 75–82; U49/F19; Lambeth Palace Library [hereafter LPL], MS 1389.

³¹ BL, MSS Burney 3, 220, 224; Add. MS 53,710; MS Egerton 2677, fol. 2; MS Stowe 12, fol. 375v; MS Stowe 49; MS Stowe 62, fol. 2v; MS Stowe 96, fol. 1; MS Stowe 378, fol. 1; MS Stowe 312; CKS, U1655/F9.

³² BL, Add. MS 34,163, fol. 130; Add. MS 24,281, fols 86r–v; Add. MS 24,282, fol. 94; CKS, U48/Z1, p. 252.

³³ BL, Add. MS 34,176, fol. 70; Add. MS 24,283, fols 17v, 99; Sir Roger Twysden, *Certaine Considerations Upon the Government of England*, ed. J.M. Kemble (Camden Society, 45, 1849) [hereafter CC], p. 145; CKS, U47/47/O1, pp. 3, 14; U47/47/Z1, pp. 45–74, 133–41; U47/47/Z2, pp. 107–10, 189–92, 197–8, 202–4; U49/F19, unfol.

³⁴ BL, Add. MS 34,163, fols 109v, 131; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1637–38*, p. 299; CKS, U47/47/Z2, p. 204; U47/47/Z1, p. 142; U49/F19, unfol; U49/Z19, p. 300; U1655/F8, p. 23.

³⁵ BL, Add. MS 34,163, fols 108v, 109; Add. MS 26,785, fols 1r–v; MS Stowe 743, fol. 140; MS Stowe 184, fols 10v–11; Bodl., MS Rawl. D. 141, p. 4; J. Peacey, 'Tactical organisation in a contested election: Sir Edward Dering and the spring election at Kent, 1640', in C. Kyle (ed.), *Parliament, Politics and Elections, 1604–1648* (Camden Society, 5th series, 17, 2001): pp. 237–72.

³⁶ BL, Add. MS 34,173, fols 18r–v; Add. MS 24,282, fol. 180v; Add. MS 24,283, fols 17v, 19, 99; *CJ*, ii. 4a; *The Short Parliament (1640) Diary of Sir Thomas Aston*, ed. J. Maltby (Camden Society, 4th series, 35, 1988): pp. 22, 143; 'Sir Roger Twysden's Narrative', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, i–iv (1858–61) [hereafter TN], i. 187, 194–5; CC, pp. 83, 141, 144; CKS, U49/Z19, p. 293.

later testimony, however, Twysden soon became alienated by the methods and ideas of Parliamentarians, and concerned regarding the threat posed to ancient liberties by arbitrary parliamentary power.³⁷ It was such concerns which underpinned Twysden's involvement in the controversial Kentish petition in the spring of 1642, the incident which brought about his arrest and brief imprisonment.³⁸ Renewed involvement in proto-Royalist agitation in Kent in the summer of 1642, in response to growing parliamentary power and infringements of subject's liberties, eventually led to a second period of incarceration.³⁹ Twysden's subsequent experience of parliamentary rule involved not merely confinement, however, but also tax evasion, plunder, and sequestration, as well as frustrated petitioning.⁴⁰ It was this treatment which prompted his research into, and reflection upon, politics and government.⁴¹

Twysden's political views are contained in a number of printed and manuscript sources. A devoted keeper of manuscript notebooks filled with evidence from his extensive reading in law, history and religion, Twysden also wrote memoirs which remained in manuscript until the late nineteenth century, and which have never been printed in full. His (slightly) more polished statements were contained in a manuscript entitled 'Certaine considerations upon the government of England', apparently written in a parliamentarian prison and eventually published in 1849,⁴² and a tract called *The Commoners Liberty*, written after his eventual release in 1646, and based in part upon his eye-witness observations of political developments in London.⁴³ Twysden was clearly struck by the emergence of radicalism in both City

³⁷ *TN*, i. 187–92, 195, 196–200, ii. 177, iii. 149; *CC*, p. 154.

³⁸ *TN*, i. 200–206, 210–13, ii. 179–80; LPL, MS 1390, p. 152; CKS, U47/47/Z2, pp. 217–20; *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, ed. W.H. Coates, V.F. Snow and A.S. Young (New Haven, 1982–92), ii. 100–101, 114, 192, 248–9, 256; *CJ*, ii. 501b, 502b–503a, 507a, 516a, 517a, 520b, 550a, 568a; BL, MS Stowe 184, fol. 49; Add. MS 34,161, fol. 2.

³⁹ *TN*, ii. 181, 184–5, 189–90, 192, 199–201; *CJ*, ii. 700b, 704a, 712b, 735b, 758b, 761a; CKS, U47/47/O1, pp. 21–2; LPL, MS 1390, p. 152; *Private Journals*, iii. 337.

⁴⁰ BL, Add. MS 34,163, fols 96, 127; MS Harleian 165, fol. 200a; Add. MS 34,174, fol. 47; Add. MS 34,166, fol. 34; LPL, MS 1390, pp. 152–5, 159; *TN*, ii. 193, 194–5, 199, 201–3, 205–6, 208–10, iii. 145–49, 152–62, 166–75, iv. 131–2, 134, 137–48, 160–70, 173–4, 180–81, 185; The National Archives [hereafter TNA], SP 28/210b, unfol.; SP 23/173, pp. 163, 179; *CJ*, iii. 124b, 137a, 203b, 297b, 409a, 674a; *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding* [hereafter *CCC*], ed. M.A.E. Green (London, 1889–93), 102, 864; *CJ*, iv. 72a, 370b, 460a. Twysden refused to join the king at Oxford, and remained critical of Charles I: *TN*, ii. 197–9.

⁴¹ CKS, U47/47/Z1, pp. 161–3; U47/47/Z2, pp. 237–8, 596; U49/Z19; BL, MS Harleian 374, fol. 237; *TN*, iv. 145, 148; Add. MS 22,916, fol. 56; MS Stowe 329, fols 1, 13v–17; MS Stowe 312; MS Stowe 359, fol. 13; *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Gentis Anglorum*, ed. Abraham Wheelocke and Sir Roger Twysden (Cambridge, 1644), pt 2, pp. 153–216.

⁴² CKS, U49/Z15; *CC*, *passim*.

⁴³ Sir Roger Twysden, *The Commoners Liberty: or the English-Mans Birth-Right* ([14 Sept.] 1648) [hereafter *CL*]; CKS, U48/Z2–3.

and Army, and had personal experience of discussing politics with Levellers.⁴⁴ Indeed, Twysden's pamphlet, interestingly subtitled 'the English-Mans Birth-Right', was printed in September 1648 as part of a Leveller-inspired pamphlet debate. Twysden's tract was explicitly framed as a response to William Prynne's defence of the legal power of the House of Lords, the latter of which was written in response to attacks upon the upper House produced by Leveller leaders.⁴⁵

Twysden was, therefore, a moderate Royalist who not only supported some of the reforms of 1640–41, but also defended mixed and limited monarchy against polemicists such as Sir Robert Filmer and Henry Ferne, and he denied that the liberties of the people, properly conceived, encroached upon the royal prerogative, or that they owed their origin to the king's grace.⁴⁶ More importantly, Twysden defended the right of resistance – by Parliament if not the people, and in order to oppose the king but not to remove the crown. Yet he also claimed that the 'common people' had generally been 'excited ... to join in arms' by 'specious pretences', which tended to be little more than 'the covers to the most damnable wickedness that ever was practised'.⁴⁷ He also professed that he had 'never read of any nation [that] attained that liberty they hoped for by arms, or that grew to a greater sanctity of life by war'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, Twysden bemoaned both the weight of parliamentary taxation (which he regarded as reflections of 'ambitious appetites'), private interests, and lust for power within the ranks of parliamentary grandees, as well as what he considered financial and political corruption on an unprecedented scale.⁴⁹

More interesting than such hints of constitutional royalism, however, are Twysden's statements regarding the power of Parliament and the role of MPs. It is possible to demonstrate, firstly, a repeated insistence upon the legal requirement for, and practical benefit of, annual Parliaments.⁵⁰ Twysden claimed that James I's failure to call regular Parliaments, and his speeches regarding dissolutions, 'perhaps might be yet not wisdom in a prince on those terms to show a discontent with the representative body of this whole kingdom, nor to give factious spirits opportunity to raise discontents with his commons'.⁵¹ Writing of the personal rule, Twysden noted that few men expected 'to see any more parliaments'; an opinion which he claimed was 'the more increased when they saw an endeavour to supply the public wants without one, a course being taken 1634 by writ to raise money for setting out a navy'. Of the dissolution of the Short Parliament, meanwhile, Twysden claimed that the king's action was undertaken 'not without the great

⁴⁴ *TN*, ii. 210–14.

⁴⁵ *CL*, *passim*.

⁴⁶ *CC*, pp. 17, 22, 33, 41, 44, 83, 86, 87, 94, 111, 112, 127, 128.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 93–4, 98–9, 100; *TN*, iv. 148–60.

⁴⁸ *CC*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ *TN*, i. 194–5, ii. 214–15, 219; *CC*, pp. 167, 171; *CL*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *CKS*, U49/Z19, p. 293; *CC*, p. 141.

⁵¹ *CC*, p. 144.

amazement of many understanding men, that (it having carried itself with such moderation as not to have put to the question anything might displease the king) they should be sent home without doing ought'.⁵²

More dramatic still were Twysden's comments regarding the jurisdiction of the House of Lords. Writing in response to Prynne, Twysden explicitly defended the claims made by John Lilburne and Richard Overton against the legal power of the upper House, explicitly citing their pamphlets and arguments.⁵³ Twysden claimed, therefore, that '[t]he subjects of this kingdom have ever esteemed (amongst earthly blessings) the greatest to have consisted in the due administration of justice', and one of the most important customs was trial by one's peers.⁵⁴ He went on to say that 'this ancient and fundamental way of proceeding hath never been in any kind altered, but to the intolerable detriment of the subject'.⁵⁵ In explaining himself further, Twysden made an interesting choice of words and phrases:

Under this impartial way of distributing equal justice to all men (in receiving which certain it is reasonable the highest duke should be levelled with the lowest beggar, and is for ought I know the chiefest levelling aimed at) the subjects of England have enjoyed great peace and happiness, ever struggling against the exercise of any arbitrary power whatsoever. But now of late, when we are freed of the Star Chamber etc, there is an opinion raised by some grandees who are feared to aim at an arbitrary power, to carry on their designs, that the Lords, without any presentment upon oath, or trial by jury, may upon a bare information, and examining of certain witnesses, proceed against any commoner whatsoever, and that to deny this, or not submit unto them, is a breach of the privilege of the house of peers.⁵⁶

Although Twysden declined to comment in detail upon 'Lilburne's and Overton's railing and libelling against the persons and jurisdictions of the Lords', he nevertheless added, 'I cannot but say I have heard they have been great and long sufferers, and by the English proverb, we may give losers leave to speak, such being the frailty of human nature'.⁵⁷

As well as expressing crypto-radical views regarding the legal powers of the House of Lords, Twysden also developed firm views on the issue of petitioning. He applauded the way in which the House of Commons had promoted petitions regarding grievances, not so much as 'framers of them', but rather as 'preferrers and forwarders, as good servants to the commonwealth'.⁵⁸ By extension, he also

⁵² *CC*, p. 145.

⁵³ *CL*, pp. 9, 12, 21, 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

⁵⁸ *CC*, p. 152.

defended the rights of petitioners, and, with his own experience in mind, expressed concern at the inconsistent attitude of the Commons, in a way which placed his views very close to those of the radicals. In unpublished portions of his memoirs, Twysden therefore noted that:

This very House of Commons, having spent much time in consideration of the petition of several citizens in favour of the treatise called the *Agreement of the People*, the 2 of December 1647, came to this resolution, that it is the right of the subject to petition the Parliament, and the right of the Parliament to judge of such petitions. And that the petitioners are bound to acquiesce in such answer as the House should give unto such petitions.⁵⁹

Having highlighted Leveller petitions, Twysden then drew attention to the fact that the Kentish MP, Richard Browne, had twice been sent to the Commons by the Kent county committee, 'to know their opinion whether men were to be sequestered for only having an hand in that [Kentish] petition, but the House of Commons would not declare they were, but seemed to incline to the contrary, so never any was but myself'.⁶⁰ Twysden concluded that 'it agrees not with the justice and mercy of the House of Commons formerly practised to punish so severely such as offend them ignorantly'.⁶¹

Twysden's most interesting comments relate to the role of representatives and the power of their constituents. Based upon his reading of historical records, not least on the issue of MPs' wages, Twysden concluded that representatives were:

such as appear in Parliament to be no other than servants deputed wholly to manage their business whom they represented, who paid them for their abode, called in the rolls their wages, which when some towns neglected, the most notable and wisest withdrew themselves from the service, of which commons made complaint.⁶²

'From hence', Twysden concluded, 'is gathered how strict a dependence the members of the lower House did take themselves to have upon those towns or countries whom they represented, who looked on them but as trustees to the commonwealth'.⁶³

Moreover, Twysden's scholarship clearly led him to believe that MPs were susceptible to receiving precise instructions from their constituents. He said of representatives:

⁵⁹ LPL, MS 1390, pp. 158–9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 159.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 159.

⁶² CC, p. 153. See also, CKS, U49/Z19, pp. 209, 373.

⁶³ CC, p. 154.

Neither did they hold so blind an obedience from those whom they represented due unto them, as they must believe all good because they concluded it, but many times, in points of difficulty, they did desire to have the advice of those from whom they came, and indeed as it is a vanity to think fit for them to have recourse to those who chose them in matters do ordinarily occur in Parliament, so in things are so new, as the like did perhaps never happen before, or very rarely, I can see no reason, under the general title of a trust, any should engage (contrary to former use) a county or kingdom, without at all acquainting them with it.⁶⁴

Once again, Twysden's views were formulated in response to his own experience, notably the occasion in July 1642 when he observed at close hand the attempt by 'divers young gentlemen' in Kent to deliver instructions to their MP, Augustine Skinner, who resolutely refused to receive them.⁶⁵ As Twysden noted in his memoirs, the local JPs, 'being ... full of resentment, did require Mr Augustine Skinner, as their servant ... to offer their humble advice for the settling the distractions of the times'.⁶⁶

Ultimately, such views provided the foundation for the most intriguing aspect of Twysden's thought, regarding the accountability of MPs to their constituents. As we might expect from someone who defended the advantages of annual Parliaments, Twysden expressed concern regarding the impact of a long Parliament. He claimed that 'when the members of it grew more intent on their private [interest] and less on the public, that which was in the first practice a benefit became a burden to the subject'.⁶⁷ More specifically, having observed politics in the 1640s, he claimed that:

the committee of privileges and elections, now joined in one, hath gained the scandalous name of the committee of affections, and I remember myself to have heard Parliament men excuse some partiality used in that place, by affirming it the only particular one friend could do another pleasure in.⁶⁸

Referring back to his comments regarding the legitimacy of giving instructions to MPs, Twysden looked to the Netherlands as a model of parliamentary practice, 'where the elected are so strictly tied to the elector's instructions, as failing in performance of them, they are subject to their censure'.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ CC, p. 154.

⁶⁵ TN, ii. 186–7; CKS, U47/47/O1, pp. 19–21; U47/47/Z2, pp. 231–3; U47/47/Z1, pp. 155–8.

⁶⁶ TN, ii. 187–8. See also: CC, pp. 153–4; LPL, MS 1390, p. 157.

⁶⁷ CC, p. 167. See also: CKS, U49/Z19, pp. 209, 373.

⁶⁸ CC, p. 171.

⁶⁹ TN, ii. 188. Twysden referred readers to the decree of Holland and West Friesland, 1587, 'lately printed in the Reipublica Hollandia'. This may have been a reference to Hugo

Fortunately, Twysden's papers also record practical applications of his views. He wrote at length, for example, about the revolt against Parliament's excise tax, which resulted in the Butchers' riot at Smithfield in early 1647.⁷⁰ Referring to Parliament's declaration in response to such disorder, Twysden claimed that this document:

filled the world with astonishment, and such as had been wholly devoted to the two Houses began to fear they should not meet with more liberty than they had enjoyed before these wars, but indifferent men saw plainly they must never see that monster totally buried, it being the most equal course to raise money. They laughed to see them keep their first principles of abusing the people by promises of better times. And I do well remember some did then say there was nothing but the army could moderate the tyranny the subject lay under, and for my part, I am confident that the House of Commons had never redressed it in the least, had they been solicited by any of less power to persuade than the officers of the army, upon whose entreaty, and their drawing near London the excise was taken off from some things most burdensome.⁷¹

He also noted in detail his response to having witnessed at first hand radical political lobbying during this period. Twysden's memoirs, therefore, recorded an occasion when, '[g]oing up to the Parliament with one of the House of Commons', he met:

a person who stood in the lobby before entering it, with several petitions in his hands to present them each member, gave me one (as supposing me one of the number) couched in very high language (such as at other times would not have been endured) concerning certain prisoners [that] had, by some power derived from them, been restrained.

Twysden was engaged in conversation by one of the protesters who spotted him reading the petition, and who justified the boldness of its language by saying that:

it is time, for we see these men that sit there have neither truth nor honesty, for they have had our persons and estates at their command, and now, instead of the liberty they promised, and we expected, they imprison us (who have gone along with them) on every slight occasion.

Grotius, *A Treatise of the Antiquity of the Commonwealth of the Battavers, which is now the Hollanders*, trans. T. Woods (London, 1649).

⁷⁰ BL, Add. MS 34,169, fol. 18. See, M.J. Braddick, 'Popular politics and public policy: the excise riot at Smithfield in February 1647 and its aftermath', *HJ*, 34 (1991): pp. 597–626.

⁷¹ *TN*, ii. 212–13.

Twysden's interlocutor also noted that the Commons, having insisted that the hated excise was an absolute necessity, subsequently proved willing to compromise in the face of pressure from the Army.⁷² Twysden's response to this harangue is particularly interesting, for although he 'thought not fit to hold long discourse with so discontented an humour', he nevertheless added that 'for my part, I could not tell how to answer him'.⁷³

Twysden's published and unpublished works from the 1640s therefore demonstrate the willingness of at least some Royalists to challenge accepted notions regarding the nature of parliamentary practice, and representative politics in the light of their experience of governance during the Long Parliament. He facilitates the development of a picture of Civil War royalism as something which was able to offer not only a diagnosis of the corruption of Parliament – in terms of the prevalence of private interests, factionalism, and financial impropriety – but also something capable of embracing annual Parliaments and mechanisms for ensuring the responsiveness of MPs to their constituents. This could be achieved by means of salaries, instructions before and during Parliaments, and the guaranteeing of petitioning rights, or by more systematic means of publicising the activity of MPs, and the financial benefits which they had secured. In diagnosing the 'corruption' of Parliament during the 1640s, and in offering novel solutions to such problems, there was much common ground between Royalists such as Twysden and those more commonly associated with Civil War 'radicalism'. Indeed, by giving radical royalism theoretical grounding and ideological justification, it is difficult to conclude that the response by the king's supporters was merely pragmatic in nature.

As such, scrutiny of Royalist 'radicalism' during the late 1640s suggests the need for re-evaluation of the things which are, and are not, constitutive of mid-seventeenth century radicalism – let alone the 'radical tradition'. This seems to be no easy task if the purpose is to maintain a distinction between men like Lilburne on the one hand and those like Twysden on the other, and if the intention is to retain conventional notions of the radical canon. One possible means of doing this would be to distinguish between 'means' and 'ends'; indeed to suggest that Royalist goals were 'conservative' while those of groups such as the Levellers were 'progressive'. Such a distinction, however, is only superficially helpful. Men like Twysden clearly sought to turn the clock back to a time before the Long Parliament, to a time when Parliaments 'were chosen to petition and expedite the affairs of others, to assent in making laws by which themselves as well as the poorest is to be governed, to see how the necessary charges of the commonwealth may be furnished'. He did not want to perpetuate a situation which would 'conduce only to their own private ends'; a situation where, 'in lieu of making laws to be governed by, they will themselves be governors', and where, 'instead

⁷² *TN*, ii. 213.

⁷³ *Ibid*, ii. 213–14. See also: LPL, MS 1390, pp. 158–9.

of being givers to the king, they will be the expeditors themselves, as well as the granters of the tax'.⁷⁴ Even so, Mendle's work highlights the danger of assuming that 'radicals' such as the Levellers were necessarily willing to jettison the notion of the three estates, and of the king as one of the bulwarks against the abuse of parliamentary power, not least because of evidence regarding their hostility to the trial and execution of Charles I.⁷⁵ There are then at least some grounds for regarding Twysden and the Levellers as having shared a perspective of exclusion and alienation, a drive to restore things that the Long Parliament had destroyed, and an 'extremity casuistry of conservation'.⁷⁶

In the face of such problems it might be better to employ words such as 'radical' and 'radicalism' with extreme caution. In order to use the terms substantively it would be necessary to find ideas and policies which truly distinguished a Lilburne from a Twysden. The political 'populism' described in this essay, in terms of tactics for guaranteeing effective representation, open government and accountability, can be shown to have been shared by these two authors in the late 1640s, and consequently does not fit the bill. Since Twysden and the Levellers shared views not merely regarding the nature of the problems created by the Long Parliament, but also concerning the solutions required, it would be vital to do more than – as Davis suggests – just draw attention to evidence of a willingness to transform constitutional constraints.⁷⁷ Given that the ideas of both Twysden and the Levellers combined 'a mixture of the restorative and the transformative',⁷⁸ it would probably be necessary to look elsewhere within the thought of the Levellers for ideas and policies which could successfully enable their location within a distinct 'tradition'. One possibility might involve exploring their attitudes towards the permanence of such remedies, and arguing that the advocacy of a written constitution along the lines of the 'Agreements of the People' indicated a rather more principled attachment to checks and balances than anything demonstrated by writers such as Twysden, Prynne or Walker. Even here, however, comparisons might prove difficult, given that opposition to the Agreements was often prompted by loyalty to previous oaths, and anger over its advocacy of religious toleration, rather than by its clauses regarding representation.⁷⁹ Pending further research into the 'foundations of freedom' during the late 1640s and early 1650s, it would perhaps be better therefore to abandon the 'substantive' approach to radicalism in favour of one which is situational and functional.

⁷⁴ *TN*, ii, 214.

⁷⁵ Mendle, 'Putney's pronouns'; A. Sharp, 'The Levellers and the end of Charles I', in J. Peacey (ed.), *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 181–201.

⁷⁶ Davis, 'Afterword', p. 357; Condren, 'Afterword', pp. 317, 320.

⁷⁷ Davis, 'Afterword', pp. 357, 358, 362.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁷⁹ E. Vernon, 'The reaction to the Agreements of the People', in Baker and Vernon (eds), *Foundations of Freedom*.

The attraction of this shift lies partly in the possibility of developing a more historicised understanding of groups like the Levellers. But its utility also rests on enabling the radicalism of Sir Roger Twysden – together with that of William Prynne and Clement Walker – as well as a host of Royalist journalists and other anonymous pamphleteers from the late 1640s, to be recognised and acknowledged. Whatever else they were, these writers were functionally oppositional, in the sense that they shared a determination to de-legitimise an existing order, and to provide means with which to create a new or remodelled political system. This is not to characterise any of these authors as ‘radicals’ in a substantive sense, but rather merely to recognise that their utterances were genuinely radical at the moment of their composition and publication. They became radicalised in the turbulent circumstances of Civil War, and particularly in the situation which existed between the end of the First Civil War and the execution of Charles I. And they may have felt little need to develop their ideas once circumstances had changed yet again. Indeed, they may subsequently have sought to distance themselves from ideas and tactics which they had been prepared to consider under the Long Parliament – although it is not entirely clear that they did so. Twysden’s political energy certainly evaporated after 1649, partly because of the need to concentrate upon rescuing his financial fortunes, and partly because he found the Commonwealth regimes ‘easier to be embraced’;⁸⁰ though it is noteworthy that his *Commoners Liberty* was republished in 1659, probably in response to the republication of Prynne’s tract.⁸¹ Thereafter, however, he devoted much of his time to scholarly research, correspondence and publication.⁸² As such, writers like Twysden may be characterised as having had radical *moments*, and of having ceased to deserve the label of radical during the 1650s and 1660s. They serve, in other words, to highlight the protean nature of Civil War radicalism. And they represent a warning that historians create neat political labels and concise political descriptions for the ideas and individuals of this metamorphic age at their peril.

⁸⁰ BL, Add. MS 34,171, fols 13, 15, 17, 21, 28; Add. MS 34,162, fols 2–61; Add. MS 34,164, *passim*; Add. MS 34,167, *passim*; Add. MS 34,172, fols 14, 16; Add. MS 34,170, fols 22, 24, 26, 28; Add. MS 34,161, fol. 32; *TN*, iv. 181–94; *CCC*, pp. 864–5; *TNA*, SP 23/228, fols 84–5; SP 23/125, pp. 577, 579; SP 23/212, p. 397; *Calendar of Proceedings of the Committee for Advance of Money*, ed. M.A.E. Green (London, 1888), p. 1394; LPL, MS 1390, p. 154; *CJ*, vi. 202b, 212a.

⁸¹ Sir Roger Twysden, *The Commoners Liberty* (1659).

⁸² CKS, U49/Z16, pp. 90, 101; U47/47/Z2, pp. 32, 51–8, 253, 292, 295–6, 299–300, 306, 343–4, 583; U47/47/Z1, pp. 83–131; U49/Z3/1; U1655/Z2; U49/Z3/3; CKS, U48/Z1; BL, Add. MS 4783, fol. 21; Add. MS 34,164, fol. 100; MS Stowe 857, fols 3, 17–18v; Add. MS 34,176, fols 74r–v; *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores X*, ed. Sir Roger Twysden (1652); Robert Filmer, *Quaestio Quodlibetica*, ed. Sir Roger Twysden (1653), sigs. A2–a2v; *Archaionomia*, ed. Abraham Wheelocke and Sir Roger Twysden (1654), pp. 153–8; W. Hamper, *The Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale* (1827), pp. 330–31, 335–7; *HMC 4th Report*, p. 412; Roger Twysden, *An Historical Vindication of the Church of England* (1657); LPL, MS 1391, fols 2, 3–4v, 5–6v, 7–9v.

Chapter 3

*News from the New Jerusalem: Giles Calvert and the Radical Experience**

Mario Caricchio

In June 1649, one of John Sadler's acquaintances gave him a copy of Gerrard Winstanley's *The New Law of Righteousnes* (1649), praising it as 'one of the best Books that ever hath been written next to the Bible'. All of Winstanley's earliest works – with the exception of the first edition of the *Mysterie of God* (1648) – bore Giles Calvert's full imprint. Published in January as the fifth of Winstanley's tracts, *The New Law of Righteousnes* had announced the imminent beginning of the Diggers' communistic experiment.¹

The Digger colony had been established in early April on St George's Hill in the parish of Walton-on-Thames, Surrey. Support for it had been organised towards the end of March through Giles Calvert's bookshop at the 'Black-Spread-Eagle'. There Richard Maidley – one of the Diggers known to historians – had to collect 'hands' for a petition asking the House of Commons to grant the 'poor of England' part of King's, Deans' and Chapters' lands together with Commons, Forests and the like legitimately 'due to them'. This petition had been framed on the basis of Peter Chamberlen's *Poor Mans Advocate* (1649).² The educational reformer Samuel Hartlib also noted that Sir James Harrington hoped to obtain £20,000 for

* This essay summarises, with a few revisions, some of the main arguments of my book, Mario Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri nella Rivoluzione inglese. Gli autori di Giles Calvert 1645–1653* (Genoa, 2003). I would like to thank Dave Collier, David Como, Ariel Hessayon, Ann-Marie Kilgallon, Silvia Sebastiani, Simona Troilo and Stefano Villani for their help and useful suggestions.

¹ Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers [hereafter SUL, HP], 28/1/21A; G. Sabine (ed.), *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley. With an appendix of documents relating to the Digger Movement* (Ithaca, NY, 1941), pp. 194–5. The second edition of *The Mysterie of God* (1649), however, does bear Calvert's imprint.

² *To the Supreme Autoritie of England. The Humble Petition of Officers and Souldiers, Citizens and Countrimen, Poor and Rich; and all sorts with all Distressed and Oppressed people of England* [1649]; Peter Chamberlen, *The Poor Mans Advocate* (London, 1649), pp. 47–[49]. The relationship between them and the identification of Richard Maidlee (as spelled in the broadside petition) is discussed in Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 69, 149–50; M. Caricchio, 'Poveri, terra e libertà: petizioni nel passaggio dalla monarchia al Commonwealth', in C. Nubola and A. Würigler (eds), *Operare la resistenza. Suppliche, gravamina e rivolte in Europa* (Bologna and Berlin, 2006), pp. 81–106.

the foundation of colonies projected by Chamberlen. On 4 April 1649, the Council of State appointed a committee of three to consider Chamberlen's plan: Harrington himself (Member of Parliament and cousin of the author of *Oceana*) and two Rumper Republicans, Cornelius Holland and Edmund Ludlow.³

The paths of Parliament members and petitioners, of Republicans and Diggers were not the only ones that crossed at Calvert's bookshop in 1649. Thomasina Pendarves, wife of the Abingdon Baptist John Pendarves, defended the prophetess Elisabeth Poole in print from the aspersions of her former Baptist brethren, inviting them to post their responses at Calvert's shop. Some months before, several letters to a 'T.P.' of Abingdon had been published by Calvert in Abiezer Coppe's *Some Sweet Sips, of Spirituall Wine* (1648), T.P. being the 'converted Jew' Thomasina Pendarves. Poole's and Pendarves's pamphlets were published early in 1649 though without Calvert's full imprint;⁴ Pendarves's letter in Poole's defence would, however, be republished in a little-known collection of epistles bearing Giles Calvert's name on the title-page.⁵ This collection was *News from the New Jerusalem*.

Issued in September 1649, it recorded debates on contemporary problems within a spiritual community which, branching out from London to the Midlands, had both a virtual and real meeting centre in Calvert's bookshop. Appalled by the momentous changes of the last two years, they asked each other whether William Sedgwick was right in denouncing the 'dark side' of the Army which had purged the Parliament in December 1648 and whether executing a King was the way to justice. The collection illustrates the context in which several army chaplains and renowned London Divines – Thomas Collier, William Erbury, Joshua Sprigge and Robert Bacon – divided on these issues, while the prophetess Elisabeth Poole was introduced to the Council of Officers to warn them against threatening Charles I's life.⁶

According to the letters contained in *News from the New Jerusalem*, one person 'shaked and trembled' at internal regeneration, while another began to reason about achieving sanctity through sinning. If a reader found anything too obscure, wrote an anonymous contributor, he could ask 'G.C.' to interpret the spiritual meaning.⁷ The 'Black-Spread-Eagle' was the forwarding address of these epistles (as it would

³ SUL, HP, 28/1/19A-B; *CSPD 1649–50*, p. 7.

⁴ M. Bell, 'Thomasina Pendarves' and 'Elizabeth Poole', in M. Bell, G. Parfitt and S. Shepherd, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers 1580–1720* (London, 1990), pp. 152, 159; M. Brod, 'Politics and Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Poole', *Albion*, 31 (1999): pp. 395–412; M. Brod, 'A Radical Network in the English Revolution: John Pordage and his Circle, 1646–54', *EHR*, 119 (2004): pp. 1232–8; Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 79, 139.

⁵ *News from the New Jerusalem* (London, 1649), pp. 121–36.

⁶ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 136–42; Brod, 'Politics and Prophecy'.

⁷ *News from the New Jerusalem*, pp. 23, 37, 54–68, 88–9, 112–15, 152–8.

be for a number of Quakers' letters in the 1650s), so it is plausible to identify 'G.C.' with Giles Calvert. He also tested Lawrence Clarkson before recommending him to the 'My One Flesh' group and Clarkson reached them when Abiezer Coppe had just ended one of his spectacular prophetic performances.⁸ One epistle hinted at the end of sin because there 'shall be no self and no more curse'. Another was sent from the Head-Quarters of Divine-Majesty saying 'I in thee have borne the sinne and curse of the old world ... into a land of forgetfulnesse, which have forgotten and forgiven all transgression'. One wonders if those were the same head-quarters where Clarkson experimented with the pleasures of sin with Sarah Kullin and 'two more like herself'.⁹

The letters printed in *News from the New Jerusalem*, however, stop in September 1649. The preface, interwoven with Neoplatonic imagery, spoke of the erring brethren who were going the wrong way, especially a 'preciouse soule, walking in darkness having no light'. God's plan was, nevertheless, to show light and love even through a person's errors. The author finished the preface on 24 September 1649, saluting 'S.P.D.' (*Salutem Plurimam Dicit*, 'bids abundant peace'). Three days later, Parliament delivered a declaration against those 'who should abuse and turn into Licentiousness the liberty in matters of conscience' – a statement which would be cited in the Blasphemy Act of August 1650.¹⁰ On 26 September, Calvert published *Divine Teachings* by Richard Coppin accompanied by the astonishing ABC for the 'Original' by Coppe. Shortly after, in a sermon to Parliament, Peter Sterry, chaplain to the Council of State, censured those who transformed antinomianism into libertinism by blurring the distinction between good and evil. This sermon was to be one of the first publications for Gregory Moule and Thomas Brewster, two of Giles Calvert's former apprentices.¹¹

News from the New Jerusalem opens a window onto a community of fellow-travellers who took divergent paths in 1649. Arguably, this marks the origin of the 'Ranter' moment in the English Revolution. At the same time, the petition linking Harrington's protégé Peter Chamberlen to Winstanley and his comrades relates to the beginning of the Digger moment. Together they illuminate a crucial phase in the progress of a milieu which revolved around Calvert's 'Black-Spread-Eagle'. This essay argues that individuals coming from a cluster of social networks, which had one nexus at Calvert's bookshop, took part in the heated debate about Church settlement and religious toleration from a shared antinomian and spiritualist standpoint. In this sense, the core authors of Calvert's stable – those who had durable relationships with him and appear to have held a common perspective – can

⁸ Lawrence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found* (London, 1660), pp. 24–5.

⁹ *News from the New Jerusalem*, pp. 36–7; Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, pp. 25–6.

¹⁰ C. Firth and R.S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660* (3 vols, London, 1911), 2, pp. 409–12.

¹¹ Peter Sterry, *The commings forth of Christ in the power of his death* (London, 1649).

be considered an offshoot of the ‘radical’ wing of the Reformation.¹² Nonetheless, radicalism is not considered here as being part of a previous or future ‘tradition’. It is argued instead that radicalism is a matter of context as well as a matter of substance.¹³

The relevant context here is the ‘printed space’ of the English Revolution, namely the virtual and real structure that the printed page and bookshops provided for the political and religious debates of the 1640s and 1650s. This public printed contest added a new dimension to the opinions of individuals and to their coalescing in a way that could cut across denominational labels and infringe upon churches’ boundaries. The Levellers as a ‘petitionary movement’ born of and exploiting ‘print culture’ are a typical example of this phenomenon, though not the only one.¹⁴ Giles Calvert’s encounters with the Levellers and their propaganda appear to have been ephemeral and peripheral. This very fact, however, increases the relevance of considering Calvert’s bookshop an important test case, as it transpires that the antinomian culture which had fissured the Puritan world in the previous decades came here to share a public non-confessional identity.¹⁵ This is not to assume a sort of ‘broad consensus’ among so-called ‘radicals’. Rather the reverse; for, by demonstrating the centrality of Calvert’s bookshop in the experience of the English Revolution, I intend to reveal radicalism as embodying diversity and difference. Of course all the hundreds of Calvert’s publications by no means shared the same stance. Nonetheless, in my view it is a plausible and demonstrable argument that the pluralistic feature of his output between 1645 and 1653 was due to a non-dogmatic outlook on which Calvert and his main authors agreed. Unity is, therefore, not an essential feature, but a consequence, as individuals and groups came to share a common public space.

Connected with the antinomianism and spiritualism of Calvert’s main authors, a consistent line of political opposition and alternative to any national Church settlement is discernible as most of the successive embodiments of the ‘radical expectations’ – Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers – passed through the door of the ‘Black-Spread-Eagle’.¹⁶ This was the ‘radical substance’

¹² G. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (3rd edn, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000).

¹³ ‘Context’ and ‘substance’ appear as mutually alternative in the typology recently offered by Glenn Burgess, who distinguishes three possible approaches to the definition of ‘radicalism’: ‘substantive’, ‘functional’ and ‘linguistic’: Burgess, ‘Introduction’, pp. 7–8; Burgess, ‘Matter of Context’, 1–3.

¹⁴ D. Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003); A. Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004).

¹⁵ D.R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, CA, 2004).

¹⁶ J. Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 241. In my view, antinomianism, spiritualism and

that struck at the very foundation of the early-modern State and political culture. Through printed debate, spiritual antinomianism and the struggle for liberty of conscience could evolve broader perspectives impacting on the social, moral and political domains, and could find common ground with more secular or properly millenarian positions. The printed world of the bookshop and the overlapping networks it brought together give this consistent line of opposition, as well as its varieties and ephemeral connections, an important political weight. Such a relevance of radicalism in the English Revolution is underestimated in many current studies.¹⁷ Instead, Gerald Aylmer was, I suggest, correct in saying, despite the apparent paradox, that booksellers like Giles Calvert and William Larnier ‘invented’ the ‘popular movement’ of the Revolution.¹⁸ Unity and diversity, publicity and political capability, if not effectiveness, are the elements which most cause Giles Calvert’s Black-Spread-Eagle to embody a radical phenomenon.

Around 800 items can be attributed to Giles Calvert’s activity between 1641 and 1662. While this is not the number of different titles traded by him (which is around 600 items), I refer to this figure because it allows a comparison with other stationers of the period. Calvert was the only stationer who had such a large number of publications, except for the printers whose trade was heavily determined by serving either Parliament or the Council of State for a long time.¹⁹ Reasons for this can be grounded in a second, even more meaningful, peculiarity: the pluralism of Calvert’s ‘catalogue’, which led Donald McKenzie to speak of his bookshop as ‘the one point in London where nearly all radical writers went to seek a sympathetic trade response to, and efficient dissemination of, their new ideas’.²⁰

opposition to State-Church link Calvert’s output of the 1640s to his close association with the Quaker movement in the 1650s. Though I do not deal here with these issues, I see an important change of context in the two moments: in the first Calvert’s authors moved within the coalition which gained power from the revolution, in the second they were in opposition to the settlement which that revolution had established.

¹⁷ For the most recent argument against the political capability of many which are commonly identified as radical, and are central to this chapter, see G. Burgess, ‘Radicalism and the English revolution’, in G. Burgess and M. Festein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 62–86.

¹⁸ G.E. Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities in mid Seventeenth-Century England. III. Varieties of Radicalism’, *TRHS*, 5th series, 37 (1988): p. 18.

¹⁹ Such as John Wright, Edward Husband and John Field. Ariel Hessayon’s entry on Calvert in the *ODNB* states that Calvert issued or sold, either individually or in partnership, more than 475 known different publications. This is an underestimate, though my count of Calvert’s publications extends to titles he sold but did not publish, as well as others without his full imprint.

²⁰ D.F. McKenzie, ‘The London Book Trade in the Later Seventeenth Century’, *Sandars Lectures* (1976), p. 12.

This aspect is even evident following a bird's eye view. As well as the notable presence of Independents at the beginning of Calvert's career,²¹ Baptists were also constantly present. While the fluidity of the 1640s warns against too rigid a denominational classification, it can be said that both the Calvinistic and, to a lesser extent, the Arminian strands of Baptism are represented.²² The 'Black-Spread-Eagle' is also especially associated with the chaplains – John Saltmarsh, Thomas Collier, William Dell, William Erbury, William Sedgwick – who emerged as a kind of coordinated group of Army 'ideologues' between 1646 and 1649. A small number of Leveller works, and later some Fifth Monarchist texts also appeared at Calvert's bookshop. The first group contains an ironic piece by Walwyn against Edwards's *Gangraena*, several under-the-counter titles by Richard Overton, and the third *Agreement of the People*. The second group includes titles by Mary Cary, Thomas Tillam, and other anonymous authors. Calvert also published the main religious and political works of Gerrard Winstanley, as well those of the 'Ranters' Abiezer Coppe, Lawrence Clarkson, Richard Coppin and Joseph Salmon.²³ He played an important part in the distribution of Jacob Boehme's works in translation, and was the reference point in London for the new edition of books by Hendrick Niclaes, the founder of the Family of Love. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645) by Edward Fisher, with which the London Familist connection of the 1630s became public, was one of Calvert's first 'best-sellers'. The writings emanating from John Pordage's 'Family' in Reading and some by TheaurauJohn Tany were also published at the 'Black-Spread-Eagle'.²⁴

As is well known, in the 1650s Calvert became the Quakers' main publisher. Yet he also issued several collections of scientific pieces promoted by Samuel Hartlib, and a few republican items, among them John Streater's *A Glympse of that Jewel, Judicial, Just, Preserving Libertie* (1653), William Sprigge's *A Modest*

²¹ Calvert was probably part of William Carter's gathered church in 1643. His son, Nathaniel, was baptised by Carter who, along with Joseph Caryl, was also one of Calvert's first authors, see: Guildhall Library, London, MS 5685, loose page between pp. 138 and 139; Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 32, 66.

²² Among Calvert's authors who at some time embraced what we would now call a 'General' Baptist stance were Francis Cornwell, Thomas Tookey, Henry Danvers, Henry Haggar, Samuel Loveday and Thomas Lambe with *The Fountain of Free Grace opened* (2nd edn, 1648). Tookey's and Cornwell's are the only General Baptist titles from before 1647 at Calvert's bookshop.

²³ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 31–9, 41–8, 146–7, 107, 164–82, 269.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 70, 74–7, 176–8; A. Hessayon, "'The Teutonicks writings': translating Jacob Boehme into English and Welsh", *Esoterica*, 9 (2007): pp. 129–65; A. Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire'. *The Prophet TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 3, 192–3, 201, 365; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 1–9. In the case of the translations of Boehme, Calvert's role seems to have been auxiliary to that of Humphrey Blunden and Lodowick Lloyd, who took over Blunden's shop at Pope's Head Alley.

Plea, for An Equal Common-wealth (1659), Henry Stubbe's *The common-wealth of Oceana Put into the Ballance, and found too light* (1660) and John Cook's *A Sober Vindication of Lt. Gen. Ludlow* (1660).²⁵ In the first years of the Restoration, Calvert, his former apprentices Thomas Brewster and Richard Moone, and their trade-relations Livewell Chapman and Francis Smith were the core-group of 'Confederate Stationers' who printed and circulated *A Phoenix: or, the Solemn League and Covenant*, among other 'seditious' pamphlets.²⁶

On a closer examination it appears that, among other important titles, Calvert sold Roger Williams's *The Bloudy Tenet, of Persecution* (the 1644 book, as opposed to his twin-piece of 1652 which openly bore the 'Black-Spread-Eagle' brand), some of the earliest works by English anti-Trinitarians, and works by the London perfectionist group of Robert Gell, William Drayton and William Parker. On the evidence of his imprint, Calvert openly owned *Divinity Anatomized*, the pamphlet in which Salmon dared to hold that the Fall had been 'no more but Gods weakness' and sin was merely a relative concept.²⁷

Notwithstanding that some of the most famous burned books of the age could doubtless be found in Calvert's stacks and drawers, from the very beginning of his career he also issued a clearly identifiable batch of propaganda designed to bolster the policies of powerful men in the Puritan coalition.²⁸ The twin pieces *The Souldiers Pocket Bible* (1643) and *The Pathway to Peace* (1643), Hugh Peters's *A word for the Armie. And two words to the Kingdome* and John Cook's *Redintegratio Amoris* and *What the Independent's would have* from the crucial months of 1647 are just a few examples.²⁹ In 1649, at the same time as he distributed the Levellers' *Agreement of the People* and Digger pamphlets, Calvert was part of the syndicate of Stationers who issued the Army Officers' *Agreement* and published John Cook's indictment against Charles I. Calvert's constant relationship with men within the 'party who made the revolution' culminated in his appointment as 'Official

²⁵ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 49–59, 259–63. For the identification of Cook as the author of Ludlow's apology, see Edmund Ludlow, *A Voyce from the Watchtower. Part Five: 1660–1662*, ed. B. Worden, *Camden Society*, 4th series, 21 (London, 1978), p. 87.

²⁶ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 57–64; M. Bell, 'Elizabeth Calvert and the "Confederates"', *Publishing History*, 32 (1992): pp. 5–49; M. Bell, "'Her usual practices": the Later Career of Elizabeth Calvert 1664–75', *Publishing History*, 35 (1994): pp. 5–64.

²⁷ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 33, 43–5, 71–2, 76; Joseph Salmon, *Divinity Anatomized* (London, 1649), pp. 65–8.

²⁸ J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers. Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 1–25.

²⁹ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 25, 36–9. For Cook's pamphlets and their links to Lord Saye and Sele's political agenda, see Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, pp. 116–17; J.S.A. Adamson, 'The English Nobility and the Projected Settlement of 1647', *HJ*, 30 (1987): pp. 589–90.

Printer' for the Council of State from May to October 1653, together with his ex-apprentice Thomas Brewster and his associate at the time of the 'Ranter' challenge, the printer Henry Hills.³⁰

The pluralistic character of Calvert's catalogue was very much a product of the conditions of the book-trade and the politics of the mid-1640s, when the take-off of his publishing enterprise can be clearly perceived. The items carrying his name suddenly increased from four to fifty-five a year between 1644 and 1646, maintaining a yearly rate of over thirty from then on. From the point of view of the evolution of the London book-trade this happened at a time when the main Baptist and Independent stationers, who had set up in the 1630s, disappeared. Gregory Dexter fled to Rhode Island after printing *The Bloudy Tenet*, while Henry Overton (d. 1647), a member of John Goodwin's gathered church, had been the young Calvert's most important trade relation. Benjamin Allen and John Dawson, who were connected to Overton, also died between 1645 and 1646. Significantly, Calvert's trade relations during the period of his rising success can nearly all be traced to the networks of apprentices, printers and booksellers who had worked with these four men. Hence people like Matthew Simmons, Thomas Paine, William Larner, Peter Cole, all of whom printed Independent, separatist and Leveller pamphlets, had already met Calvert within the illicit pamphleteering circuit of the early 1640s. Furthermore, Gartrude Dawson was one of the printers most used by Calvert and Brewster, while Henry Hills had been apprenticed to Simmons and Paine. Ruth Raworth and her second husband, Thomas Newcombe, would free some of Calvert's future printers like James Cottrell and the Quaker Andrew Sowle.³¹ This network of relations also incorporated the Howses, whose members had been part of the Familist and Antinomian underground since the 1630s.³²

³⁰ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 39, 48. Contrary to what is generally assumed, Calvert, Hills and Brewster remained official printers to the Council of State until October 1653. Their last publication openly bearing the Commonwealth's arms is an order against mutinous meetings (Wing E794), dated 27 October 1653.

³¹ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 64–5; M. Caricchio, 'Le relazioni di mestiere di Giles Calvert, libraio-editore della Rivoluzione inglese', *Annali del Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche di Bologna* (2001–2002): pp. 45–62.

³² Robert Howse (also spelled Howes), father of Hannah Allen, was the 1630s bookbinder in Lombard Street named by Giles Creech's deposition to the High Commission. The Howses were well established in the book trade and Hannah Allen, after the death of her husband, was a trade-partner of Henry Overton and Matthew Simmons in Independent publishing. She then married Livewell Chapman, the 1650s Fifth Monarchist publisher. Thomas Brewster freed an apprentice with Robert Howse. The Howse stationers were most probably relatives of the known Familist Edward Howes and it should be noted that the ironmonger (Samuel) Dawson, named in Creech's deposition, may be related to the Dawson printers; TNA, SP 16/520/85, 86; D.F. McKenzie (ed.), *Stationers' Company Apprentices, 1605–1640* (Charlottesville, VA, 1961), nos. 913, 1484 or 2676, 'Appendix', p. 177; D.F. McKenzie (ed.), *Stationers' Company Apprentices, 1641–1700* (Oxford, 1974), nos. 516, 2246; M. Bell, 'Hannah Allen and the Development of a Puritan Publishing Business,

Being of a younger generation than his first Independent and Baptist associates, Calvert appears to have inherited their system of trade relations at a time when political conflict underwent a decisively radical turn. Other young stationers covered some areas of this market: William Larner and Thomas Paine, for example, were the main disseminators of Leveller propaganda, while Henry Cripps inherited his master Henry Overton's links to the Independents and to John Goodwin's congregation. Even so, most non-Presbyterian publications passed through the hands of Calvert and his relations, to such an extent that they can be said to have shaped the radical market of the 1650s, as those of Henry Overton had done, to a lesser degree, until the mid-1640s. Thomas Edwards described Overton as an Independent bookseller, and Calvert as a 'sectary' in the space of a single paragraph.³³ The shift from Overton to Calvert as a main outlet of non-Presbyterian publications is a fundamental aspect to be considered when one realises that Calvert's increasing success began with the polarisation of parties, which shattered the Puritan coalition.

As Ann Hughes' complex enquiry into the text and context of *Gangraena* has brilliantly shown, two opposed political communities, the Presbyterian and the sectarian, were then created through print. A new aggressive Presbyterian politics was a crucial factor. I am not totally convinced, however, that the Presbyterians had the lead in the political development and that the sectarian community coalesced – just or mainly – as a reaction to *Gangraena*'s elision of its internal differences for propaganda purposes.³⁴ Seen from the perspective of the 'Black-Spread-Eagle', the coming together of the different strands of 'sectarians' took root independently in various social networks, contingent political alliances and shared religious outlooks.

Calvert's rise began when the rupture in the Puritan front became public through his bookshop and the medium of Henry Burton's vociferous polemic, his ex-fellow Presbyterian sufferers having closed the 'doors' of the Church to the latter for the predication of the 'truth'. In September 1645 Presbyterians were indeed circulating the petition for the 'speedy' settlement of the Church, which had been framed by the majority of the Assembly of Divines. In Burton's wake, John Saltmarsh began to argue that the proceedings about the Church settlement should take their time and gain publicity. Throughout the paper fight which followed, combining with the controversies aroused by *Gangraena*, Calvert was to be fundamental in constructing Saltmarsh's identity by using his expertise in the trade and the legitimising licences of John Bachiler. Saltmarsh appeared in print

1646–51', *Publishing History*, 26 (1989): pp. 6–7; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 7, 415–31, 469–73.

³³ Caricchio, 'Le relazioni di mestiere di Giles Calvert', pp. 52–62; Thomas Edwards, *The Second part of Gangraena* (London, 1646), pp. 7–8.

³⁴ Hughes, *Gangraena*, pp. 313–17, 349, 354, 383–5, 403, 409.

as a 'private' Christian who sought truth through errors, as against the pretended certainties of a host of divines.

In contrast to Edwards's sectarian labelling exercise, that identity was something of a puzzle to Presbyterian ministers such as John Ley who acknowledged being unable, even after reviewing all his writings, to ascertain Saltmarsh's actual position, or indeed to firmly call him a Seeker or an Antinomian. Ley's colleague in the Assembly and Hartlib's close friend, John Dury, had a clearer insight: according to him, Saltmarsh's religion pivoted on an 'unruly' spirituality which ushered in all kinds of opinion about the Church as well as instilling a democratic principle in the State. For Dury, writing to Hartlib in April 1646, Saltmarsh had become the main writer on behalf of a 'party' which aimed to impede the Presbyterian Church-settlement, at the risk of ruining any possibility of 'Orderly Courses and Establishments'.³⁵

This web of interests – the 'party' at which Dury hinted – had a basis in existing social networks. They existed and expanded outside the pages of *Gangraena*, though clearly detectable within Calvert's publications. Some of their threads appear to be connected to the environment of merchants and nobles, who converged first in the Providence Island Company and then in the Summers Islands Company, and who also clustered around the extended family of the Earl of Warwick and Viscount Saye and Sele.³⁶ It is significant that, shortly after the first Burton and Saltmarsh pamphlets against the Presbyterian settlement were issued, Calvert published *Truth Gloriously Appearing* by Nathaniel White, minister in the Summers Islands (the tract was intended to lobby Parliament to defend the 'tolerant' religious policy of the Company).³⁷ During these same months at Calvert's 'Black-Spread-Eagle' Robert Bacon defended himself from an attack which he felt actually aimed at injuring his patron, William Fiennes, Viscount Saye and Sele, 'the most constant Patriot of this Country'. Bacon dedicated one of his writings in 1646 to Saye and Sele and another to his wife Elizabeth. Similarly, Calvert's spearhead in the toleration debate, John Saltmarsh, dedicated his *The Smoke in the Temple* (1646) to those 'Noble Patriots' Saye and Sele and Oliver Cromwell.³⁸

³⁵ John Ley, *Light for Smoke* (London, 1645), sigs. B2r–C1v; John Dury, *A demonstration of the Necessity of settling some Gospel Government* (London, 1654), sig. A3v, pp. 21, 41, 43; SUL, HP, 3/3/13A–B; Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 87–133; M. Caricchio, 'John Dury, reformer of education against the radical challenge', *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 2010: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3787>.

³⁶ R. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution. Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (Cambridge, 1993).

³⁷ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 67–8. An Act for 'liberty of conscience' at the Summers Islands was granted in October 1645.

³⁸ Robert Bacon, *The Spirit of Prelacie yet working* (London, 1646), p. 32; Robert Bacon, *Christ Mighty in Himself & Members* (London, 1646); John Saltmarsh, *Smoke in the Temple* (London, 1646).

Joshua Sprigge, who like Bacon had the ear of Saye and Sele, then published his main theological writings through Calvert and helped into print more than one piece by his spiritual fellows like William Sedgwick and Christopher Goad. Among the minor pieces Sprigge sent to the 'Black-Spread-Eagle' was a text against enclosures by the former Providence Island officer, Henry Halhead. Sprigge added a preface wishing that England and the new-born Commonwealth 'might deservedly be christned The Isle of Providence'. He was a long-standing friend and fellow-traveller of Bacon both during the revolutionary period and after the Restoration, and was identified together with Peter Sterry as a mainstay of the 'Vanists' – as Richard Baxter styled the circle of friends sharing Henry Vane's 'obscure' theological opinions.³⁹

The Eleutherian Islands Project, the colonial venture which was born from the religious conflict affecting the Summers Islands, grouped together a number of Behemenists and Republicans among whom TheaurauJohn moved.⁴⁰ Readers and translators of Boehme's writings were connected to Calvert by the fact that some of their editions bore the 'Black-Spread-Eagle' imprint. Other important figures in Calvert's milieu included a number of Eleutherian adventurers. One was Peter Chamberlen, whose *Poor Mans Advocate* was connected to the foundation of William Everard's and Gerrard Winstanley's Digger colony in Surrey. This text was committed to the consideration of a committee which included the republican Cornelius Holland. Also an Eleutherian adventurer, Holland had connections with Vane and Bacon. Another example is Nathaniel Rich, who was probably patron to the author of *The State of Christianity stated* published by Calvert in 1650. The first trip to the Eleutherian Islands, moreover, failed because of the extreme antinomian opinions of one Captain Butler. He may perhaps be identified as the author of *The Little Bible of the Man* 'Printed in the first year of Englands Liberty, 1649 ... at the black spread Eagle'.⁴¹

An original and constant core of the spiritual community centred on the 'Black-Spread-Eagle' is therefore to be found in the net of relationships which clustered around the extended family of Saye and Sele, Henry Vane and the new colonial companies. It should be emphasised, however, that while this contributed to shaping Calvert's catalogue and stable of authors it was just one – albeit probably the most important – of several overlapping networks that his bookshop was instrumental in knitting together and expanding. Hence the 'revolutionary opening

³⁹ Henry Halhead, *Inclosure thrown Open* (London, 1650), sig. A2r; K. Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641: the Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge, 2004); Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 68–70, 74, 314.

⁴⁰ Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire', pp. 294–6.

⁴¹ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 69–72; *The More Excellent Way* (London, 1650), sig. A3v; *The State of Christianity Examined, unfolded, and character'd* (London, 1655). It is noteworthy that a reader has repeatedly written the name of Morgan Llwyd on one extant copy of this second tract.

of the press to Socinian works' also began at the 'Black-Spread-Eagle'.⁴² Bacon's *Spirit of Prelacie* was a vindication of his preaching in Gloucester at a time when John Biddle was first apprehended for holding anti-Trinitarian beliefs. Bacon had been a founder of the Broadmead Church of Bristol with Richard Moone senior: Moone's son and namesake, who was apprenticed to Calvert on Bacon's arrival in London in 1645, was to be Biddle's publisher in the 1650s. In the meantime, another Gloucester anti-Trinitarian, John Knowles, together with John Fry – the 'Socinian' MP defended by Vane and Holland in the House of Commons – had published at the 'Black-Spread-Eagle'.⁴³ Knowles, and indeed Calvert himself, had connections with the Dukinfield Independent congregation in Cheshire, which in turn was linked to Morgan Llwyd's in Wrexham. Nor was Fry exempt from accusations of holding 'Ranter' opinions.

The anti-Trinitarians from Gloucester and Dukinfield, mystic readers and authors like Bacon,⁴⁴ members of the Eleutherian project, the rural Behmenist circle of John Pordage in Bradfield, the Baptist communities in the Abingdon area where Abiezer Coppe began insinuating extreme antinomian principles as well as those of the Midlands where Richard Coppin preached, the circle of Independents and Baptists in Rye which issued the manuscript of *John the Divine's Divinity*, the perfectionist group around Robert Gell which attracted London Antinomians and Familists, the Diggers and the utopian projectors like Chamberlen – all were interwoven in an expanding web. It was due to the existing links between members of this milieu and to Calvert's reputation in giving them a public dimension that the 1630s Antinomian and Familist John Webster and members of the new Quaker movement, who came down to London in the 1650s, went through his 'open door for the Truth'. Many Republican and Fifth Monarchist texts also passed through his hands together with those of his closest trade-relations for the same reasons.⁴⁵

A core group, however, can be detected in this complex set of networks, whose spiritualist and antinomian interests shaped the activity of Calvert's bookshop and were identified with it. This was the community which corresponded in *News from the New Jerusalem* and from which the Digger and 'Ranter' moments of the English Revolution emerged. It was also the circle of 'friends of Saltmarsh', who in the summer of 1649 published his final words and letters to the Officers' Council.⁴⁶ Samuel Gorton, the New England Familist, described them in 1656

⁴² J. Marshall, 'Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution', *The European Legacy*, 4 (2000): p. 538.

⁴³ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 71–3.

⁴⁴ On Bacon's interest and translation of continental mystic work, and for his possible contacts with Behmenists in Holland, see: T.A. Birrell, 'English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles', *Downside Review*, 94 (1976): pp. 66–9.

⁴⁵ Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 74–85.

⁴⁶ *Englands Friend Raised from the Grave* (London, 1649). For evidence of the close relationship of Calvert with Mary Saltmarsh after John's death, see: TNA, C54/3865, mems. 6–7; TNA C54/3808, mems. 26–8.

as those for whom the name of Saltmarsh was ‘*an oymntment poured out*’.⁴⁷ This community was both the Familist milieu, which according to Geoffrey Nuttall, surrounded James Nayler in the 1650s,⁴⁸ and the spiritual fellowship that Robert Rich – Nayler’s most faithful disciple – called the ‘Church of the First Born’. Rich, one-time Quaker, Boehme reader, and long after the 1650s, ‘loving’ friend to Robert Bacon, Joshua Sprigge, John Warr and Joseph Salmon wrote that Calvert had been like Rahab for this community. By implication the ‘Black-Spread Eagle’ had been the house on the walls from which ‘the spiers out of the Truth and the new Light’ came to conquer Jericho.⁴⁹

‘Unity in variety’, which according to Jonathan Scott characterises radicalism as a process, represented both the truth and substance of religion at the ‘Black-Spread-Eagle’. From the late 1640s Calvert’s imprint became synonymous with a strand of works which increasingly merged complete liberty of conscience with a spiritualistic and antinomian understanding of religion. This consistent line of thought began with Saltmarsh’s writings and was continued with by several Army chaplains, the London preachers and soldier prophets – Nicholas Couling, Thomas Butler, Francis Freeman, Robert Wilkinson and Joseph Salmon – with Gerrard Winstanley’s five theological works, and John Warr’s brief aphoristic and intense *Administrations Civil and Spiritual*.

The ideas of the complete liberty of the spirit, the exaltation of free grace against the law and of Christ’s residing in the believer as well as all the ambiguous leanings towards, and relationships with, perfectionist theological opinions, so powerfully analysed by David Como for the antinomian culture of the 1620s and 1630s,⁵⁰ fully came into the open via Calvert’s authors. From the point of view of the transience of ‘forms’ and their insignificance for ‘true’ religion they constantly dealt with the political issues of the day; firstly with the problem of the Church

⁴⁷ S[amuel], G[orton], *Saltmarsh returned from the dead, in Amico Philaethe* (London, 1655), sig. A2r. ‘Philaethe’ may be the nickname by which ‘insiders’ of this community called Robert Bacon. On Gorton, see P. Gura, ‘The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton. New Light on the Relation of English to American Puritanism’, *WMQ*, 3rd series, 36 (1979): pp. 78–100; P. Gura, ‘Samuel Gorton and Religious Radicalism in England 1644–1648’, *WMQ*, 3rd series, 40 (1983): pp. 121–4.

⁴⁸ G.F. Nuttall, ‘James Nayler. A Fresh Approach’, *Journal of Friends’ Historical Society*, supplement no. 26 (1954).

⁴⁹ TNA, Prob 11/361; Robert Rich, *Love without Dissimulation* ([London], 1667), p. 7; Robert Rich, *Mr. Robert Rich His Second Letters from the Barbadoes* (London, 1669), pp. 2, 9–10. On the ‘Church of the First-born’, see: G.F. Nuttall, ‘The Last of James Nayler. Robert Rich and the Church of the First Born’, *The Friends’ Quarterly*, 23 (1985): pp. 527–34, N. Smith, ‘Hidden Things Brought to Light: Enthusiasm and Quaker Discourse’, in T. Corns and D. Loewenstein (eds), *The Emergence of Quaker Writing. Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1995), pp. 57–69.

⁵⁰ Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 35–49, 138–391.

settlement, but also with the problem of the regicide and then with the meaning of freedom for a Commonwealth. They could differ on specific issues. Some, such as Sedgwick and Erbury, emphasised more than most that the divine destruction of all powers and forms impelled the new authorities to alleviate all religious, social and political oppression. Others, like Winstanley, brought this ideal of practical Christianity to a more original intellectual turn. Yet they shared the common antinomian and spiritualist outlook which fostered dialogue and pluralism at Calvert's bookshop.

Following J.C. Davis, many – though not all – historians now describe this kind of spiritualist outlook as ‘anti-formalism’, thereby implying a kind of inherent political impracticability typical of the ‘radicalism’ of the English Revolution (if ‘radicalism’ is even still a concept useful in this context).⁵¹ According to this view, radicalism seems destined to end in an experience of disillusionment because of its own ‘anti-formalist’ ambitions.⁵² This emphasis on being *against* forms appears to be overstated. The core authors at the ‘Black-Spread-Eagle’ were mostly speaking of a dispensation that was *above* any form,⁵³ in respect of which all known religious opinions and fellowships were erroneous yet at the same time also ‘degrees, distances and approaches’ or further steps towards its revelation.⁵⁴ This outlook falls under the category of ‘Seekerism’, which was intended as the retreat from all existing religious creeds in expectation of a revelation of the true uniting faith. What I am describing, however, was a distinctive position which did not await the return of the primitive Church, in contrast to the more noticeable ‘Seeker’ attitude.⁵⁵ Saltmarsh and Collier agreed in the late 1640s that not only the Baptist but also the ‘Seeker’ dispensation would be superseded. All dispensations

⁵¹ J.C. Davis, ‘Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660’, *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): pp. 193–213; J.C. Davis, ‘Against Formality: One Aspect of the English Revolution’, *TRHS*, 6th series, 3 (1993): pp. 265–88. For the most recent critiques of the term radicalism in relation to the English Revolution, see Burgess, ‘Radicalism and the English revolution’; T. Cooper, ‘Reassessing the Radicals’, *HJ*, 50 (2007), pp. 241–52.

⁵² This seems to be true even for Jonathan Scott, for whom radicalism defines the English Revolution. See Scott, *England's Troubles*, pp. 9, 240–42, 267–8; J. Scott, ‘Radicalism and Restoration: The shape of the Stuart Experience’, *HJ*, 31 (1988): pp. 455–7. To Burgess many of those who are labelled ‘radicals’ were led into a ‘passive’ ‘apolitical’ and ‘antipolitical’ attitude by their religious principles, and consequently cannot be defined as ‘radicals’: see Burgess, ‘Radicalism and the English revolution’, pp. 78–81.

⁵³ This distinction between ‘anti-formalism’ and ‘supra-formalism’ has been made by Brian Gibbons to highlight differences between the ‘Behmenists’ and ‘Quakers’: see B. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 6.

⁵⁴ John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory* (London, 1647), pp. 53, 67–72. See also Bacon, *Christ Mighty in Himself*, pp. 6–8.

⁵⁵ My reading builds upon the distinction clarified in D. Gwyn, ‘Joseph Salmon: From Seeker to Ranter – and Almost to Quaker’, *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 58

were indeed temporary and therefore never destined to restoration. God was not confined in any church, not even the primitive one.⁵⁶

This meant that any national Church settlement would ‘dam’ the infinite liberty of spirit, ‘which blows *when* and *where* it listeth’.⁵⁷ It also implied that erroneous opinions had to be fully tolerated as a pathway towards truth and that the millennium generally had to be considered as an individual spiritual regeneration. The New Jerusalem, thought Bacon, would be that heaven depicted in Hebrews 12:22–4 where believers united and churches disappeared. In Sprigge’s words, it was ‘unity of believers in the principle, and destruction of the believers in the forms’ because ‘God is in all forms, but comprehended by no form’.⁵⁸ Every individual and community had to freely enjoy the dispensation, opinions and ordinances they were in. The ‘comprehensive’ Christian would discern the element of truth they contained, being free whether to use those ‘forms’ or not; everyone should be free to pray to God as he or she was persuaded, but the Saints ‘of several opinions’ should also be free to ‘worship together’.⁵⁹

This kind of ‘supra-formalism’ in the antinomian circles of the Revolution encouraged interest in Boehme and Nicolaes. It was an ecumenical stance. Consequently it also contributed to drawing the line at the ‘*High-attainers*’ – people like Coppe and Clarkson, who boasted of having reached perfection and came to utterly despise those in inferior conditions. Indeed, the aim of the author of the preface to *News from the New Jerusalem* was not to:

take off formes, [from those] that enjoy Gods presence in them; but to give an account to those who walked not in formes, and to call those higher then formes, from whom God is apparently departed in formes.⁶⁰

(1998): pp. 114–15; D. Gwyn, *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience* (Wallingfield, PA, 2000), pp. 11–12, 85–94.

⁵⁶ Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory*, pp. 289–97; Thomas Collier, *The Marrow of Christianity* (London, 1647), pp. 47–9; Thomas Collier, *A General Epistle, To The Universal Church of the First Born* (London, 1648), pp. 66–70; Joseph Salmon, *Anti-Christ in Man* (London, 1647) pp. 30–31; I[ohn] F[ile], *John the Divine’s Divinity* (London, 1649), pp. 14, 30–31; William Erbury, *The Babe of Glory Breaking forth in the broken Flesh of the Saints* (London, 1653), pp. 64, 73–[75], 84–5.

⁵⁷ Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory*, sig. A5v; John 3:7–8; Collier, *General Epistle*, pp. 71–4.

⁵⁸ Bacon, *Christ Mighty*, pp. 163; Joshua Sprigge, *A Testimony to an Approaching glory* (London, 1648), pp. 133–6; Erbury, *Babe of Glory*, sigs. B2i–B3r, p. 103.

⁵⁹ Collier, *General Epistle*, p. 93; Robert Wilkinson, *The Saints Travel to the Land of Canaan* (London, 1648), p. 50; Thomas Royle, *A Glimpse of some Truths* (London, 1648), pp. 3–5; Sprigge, *Testimony*, pp. 140–58; Robert Purnell, *Good Tydings for Sinners* (1649; London, 1652), pp. 104–5, 109, 113–16.

⁶⁰ *News from the New Jerusalem*, sig. t1r; see also: Purnell, *Good Tydings for Sinners*.

The antinomian circles of the 1640s – which were not and did not aim at being either a congregation or a sect⁶¹ – found at Calvert's 'Black-Spread-Eagle' a public identity which went beyond confessional boundaries.

Seen in this fluid context, those 'Seekers' 'waiting upon God' did not have a passive political attitude. 'Christ's rising' in every man and woman was liable to bring forth challenging visions of Church, State and society, as well as actions which would cause them to be realised. While Sedgwick distanced himself early on from the political sphere, John Warr believed that the alteration of government and laws was a way for the 'spiritual Christian' to 'contemplate and admire the outgoings of God in these things, *as being Himself rather above then against them*'.⁶² In Winstanley's view, Christ within empowered men and women to act and realise the social content of 'true and undefiled' religion – whether occupying lands, addressing Parliament or circulating petitions.⁶³ Above all the stance emerging from Calvert's bookshop during the course of the Revolution was one which challenged both the Erastian principles pervading the Independent alliance, and the Presbyterians' clericalist leanings. As Dury clearly perceived, Saltmarsh's 'unruly spirituality' went beyond his patrons' political aims. Likewise, while Saye and Sele's protection had enabled Bacon to obtain John Bachilor's press licences in the 1640s, Bacon's vision and those of the Independents had diverged by 1652.⁶⁴

This kind of permeable spiritualist outlook entailed a clear-cut separation between Church and State, enabling a convergence with political stances of a more secular tendency, such as those held by the Levellers. Moreover, it encapsulated a very pragmatic political goal as the charter granted to the Eleutherian Adventurers illustrates: Eleutheria was envisaged as a 'republick' to which every individual would be granted access and where 'no names of distinction or reproach, as *Independents, Antinomian, Anabaptist*' would be tolerated; either as an offence or, significantly, as a self-acknowledged identity. Above all, it would be a land where 'no Magistracie or Officers of the Republike' would have any power of 'judgement in matter of Religion', because their 'jurisdiction' would extend only 'to men as men'.⁶⁵ This resonates with the views Saltmarsh articulated at the same time and which remained the most coherent unifying principle within Calvert's booklist. By arguing against magistrates' 'restraining powers', his authors – Erbury, Sprigge,

⁶¹ Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, p. 453.

⁶² John Warr, *Administrations Civil and Spiritual* (London, 1648), sig. A3r (my italics).

⁶³ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 316, 373–4.

⁶⁴ Robert Bacon, *A Taste of the Spirit of God* (London, 1652), p. 40; see also, pp. 2, 22–3, 35.

⁶⁵ *Articles and Orders, made and agreed upon the 9th Day of July, 1647 [...] By the Company of Adventurers for the Plantation of the Islands of Eleutheria* ([London], 1647).

Bacon and Butler – were prominent voices that helped bring about the split in the Independent coalition during the Whitehall Debates on this very issue.⁶⁶

The indwelling spirit led to political mobilisation as oral, epistolary and printed exchanges came through the bookshop. The opposition to the reconstruction of a new national Church involving the magistrates' 'restraining powers' – in the form of John Owen's *Humble Proposals* – empowered a timely public campaign. In early 1652 the 'champions for the liberty of the soul', to quote Roger Williams, organised themselves and published at the 'Black-Spread-Eagle'. Some of Calvert's earlier authors – Major Butler, Collier, Dell, TheaurauJohn and Sprigge's esteemed friend, Christopher Goad – joined in a mobilisation that, as Polizzotto has noted, involved individuals having strong ties with Henry Vane. Vane in turn published his intervention (his first printed statement) for Calvert in June 1652.⁶⁷ After this campaign achieved a temporary success, the clash moved significantly onto 'freedom of the press'. This was denounced by a syndicate of mainly Presbyterian stationers in *A Beacon set on Fire* (1652), which called Parliament's attention to Popish and blasphemous books. The rejoinder by a group of soldiers and citizens entitled *The beacons quenched* (1652) bore the imprint of the stationers – Giles Calvert, Henry Hills and William Larnier – who mostly fed what their rivals called the 'fair of toleration'. The nature of this pamphlet – its contents, authors and publishers – underlined that the real issue at stake in this 'fair of toleration' was the principle of loose control linked to opinions then current in Vane's circle.⁶⁸

During the heated controversies that engulfed the Barebone's Parliament in 1653 the voice of the 'Black-Spread-Eagle' could still be heard through the writings of John Webster, William Dell and William Erbury. It distinguished itself both from a renewed Independent-Presbyterian coalition, which supported a new national Church settlement, and from the Fifth Monarchists, who tried instead to gain power for the Saints and to advance a literal reign of Christ on earth. In the vote of 10 December 1653 those who understood the second coming of Christ as happening within individuals had their own alternative political programme, even

⁶⁶ *The Clarke Papers*, pp. 84–7, 99–100, 107–9, 125–7, 171–81; C. Polizzotto, 'Liberty of Conscience and the Whitehall Debates of 1648–49', *JEH*, 26 (1975): pp. 69–82.

⁶⁷ C. Polizzotto, 'The Campaign against *The Humble Proposal* of 1652', *JEH*, 38 (1987): pp. 569–81; 'The Winthrop Papers', *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 4th series, 7 (1865): p. 281; *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, ed. R. Cocroft, G. La Fantasie and B.F. Swan (2 vols, Hanover and London: Brown University Press, 1988), 1, p. 355; Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 201–16; Henry Vane, *L'esame dello zelo, ovvero Discorso per la libertà di coscienza nelle questioni religiose*, ed. and trans. M. Caricchio (Genoa, 2003), pp. 24–30, 38–53.

⁶⁸ Luke Fawne, Samuel Gellibrand, Joshua Kirton, John Rothwell, Thomas Underhill and Nathaniel Webb, *A Beacon set on Fire* (London, 1652); Thomas Pride, William Gough, Tobias Bridge, Richard Merest, William Kiffen, Isaac Gray, George Gosfrith and Samuel Richardson, *The beacons quenched* (London, 1652), pp. 12–13; Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 249–58.

though they joined hands with the Fifth Monarchists in order to sink the proposed Church settlement based on a revised version of Owen's plan.

This was expressed by a small pamphlet called *The Temples foundation laid: or, A Way for Settlement of Religion* by 'M.T., Member of Parliament', which was intended to be presented to the House of Commons and argued against the need for a Church settlement. Starting from premises resonant of Saltmarsh and Vane, it proposed a loose system of religious communities held together by the itinerant preaching of men 'of enlarged spirits' like 'Mr Sterry, Mr. William Sedgwick, Mr Dell, Mr Bacon, Mr. Sprigg &c.'. With the exception of Sterry, they were preachers who had constantly published for Calvert, who recognised themselves, and were recognised in turn, as sharing the same spiritual experience.⁶⁹

As some contemporary accounts testify, a 'patriot' was handling an 'expedient' to end the quarrel on Church settlement and tried to present it above the confusion and shouts in which Barebone's Parliament dissolved on the morning of 12 December 1653. *The Temples foundation laid* may be that very 'expedient'.⁷⁰ It points out a 'third way' which emerged during and through the Revolution, as the 'Black-Spread-Eagle' voiced Antinomian and spiritualist stances that increasingly departed from the coalition to which it owed its initial fortunes. This was the 'Seeker' interest shielded, as Baxter put it, by the 'Vanists'. It was no less real and effective because it refused to be a 'Church' and merely had a bookshop sign as a recognisable identity. Dury and Baxter knew this all too well while considering the feasibility of an agreement between the different English religious 'interests'.⁷¹ Indeed, the 'third way' I have tried to draw out in this essay dismissed a 'stately frame of wood to preach and pray in ... distinct forms' and a '[Babel] Tower' made of 'forcible laws' and 'fundamentals'. It was, however, no less a politically viable alternative.⁷² Here we have the radical 'substance' in the context of a printed public world of religion and politics. It was defeated. In a different political setting the Quakers shaped it anew. Even so, disillusionment came after defeat.

⁶⁹ M. T[omlinson?], *The Temples Foundation laid: or, A Way for Settlement of Religion* (London, 1653), pp. 1–8. See, for example, William Erbury, *The Grand Oppressor* (London, 1652), pp. 30, 32.

⁷⁰ *A True Narrative of the cause and manner of the Dissolution of the Late Parliament* (1653), p. 4; [Samuel]L. [Highlan]D., *An Exact Relation of the Proceedings and transactions of the Late Parliament* (London, 1654), p. 25; A. Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Oxford, 1982), p. 344; Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri*, pp. 296–302.

⁷¹ G. Nuttall, 'Presbyterians and Independents. Some Movement for Unity 300 years ago', *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society of England*, 10 (1952): pp. 8–9.

⁷² William Erbury, *The Bishop of London* (London, 1653), p. 2; [Henry Vane], *Zeal Examined: Or, A Discourse for Liberty of Conscience in Matters of Religion* (London, 1652), pp. 45–6. Jonathan Scott rightly identifies what I call a 'third way' in his *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writings of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 52.

Chapter 4

Gerrard Winstanley, Radical Reformer*

Ariel Hessayon

‘And this we count is our dutie, to endeavour to the uttermost, every man in his place ... a Reformation to preserve the peoples liberties, one as well as another’

Gerrard Winstanley, *A Declaration from the Poor oppressed People of England* (1649), n.p.

‘the main Work of Reformation lies in this, to reform the Clergy, Lawyers, and Law’

Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a platform* (1652), p. 7

From Radical Reformation to English Revolution

There are six complementary approaches that are essential for enriching our understanding of the thought of Gerrard Winstanley (1609–1676) and the meaning of the short-lived Digger plantations at St George’s Hill in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey (April to August 1649) and the Little Heath in neighbouring Cobham (August 1649 to April 1650). One is biographical, which through careful recovery and reconstruction of the available evidence emphasises the importance of Winstanley’s experiences – especially his regional origins, social background, education, religious upbringing, bankruptcy, agricultural endeavours and, after the Diggers’ defeat, intermittent local office-holding – in the development of his thought. The lives of his fellow Diggers and associates have been similarly explored to the same purpose, though comparative lack of documentation has yielded a less complete picture. A second concentrates on local contexts and the Diggers’ social networks: the topography of St George’s Hill and Cobham, social and political relations within the parishes of Walton and Cobham, economic pressures, the shattering impact of Civil War and widespread rural unrest. A third places the

* In preparing this essay I have profited from the advice of Sarah Apetrei, Mario Caricchio, David Finnegan and Lorenza Gianfrancesco. Readers should be aware that it was completed before the publication of the magisterial new edition of *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, edited by Thomas Corns, Ann Hughes and David Loewenstein (Oxford, 2010). Though Winstanley and the Diggers sometimes glossed scriptural phrases they did not always provide sources for their biblical allusions. I have therefore supplied these references to the so-called Authorised Version of the Bible (1611) in brackets. I alone am responsible for any mistakes or shortcomings.

Diggers within their wider milieu by examining what their writings and reported activities had in common with their contemporaries nationally; how they resembled yet also differed from other political and religious movements and communities then active, including the gathered Churches; why certain concepts they espoused were radical at specific moments during the course of the English Revolution. This approach invites a rigorous comparison between Diggers and Levellers, Particular and General Baptists, Familists, 'Seekers', 'Ranters', Quakers and Behmenists, in addition to less known 'wel-affected' communities in London and the southern and midland counties – particularly Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The fourth involves making connections, identifying resonances and suggesting parallels between the Diggers and their predecessors over a longer period, going back to the Reformation and beyond. This requires a detailed knowledge of Winstanley's reading habits, the manner in which he appropriated and reworked his sources – notably biblical, millenarian, hermetic, mystic, utopian, philosophical, legal and medical texts – together with a convincing explanation for how potent ideas and distinctive, sometimes proscribed, scriptural interpretations were transmitted over time and across various geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries. The fifth is primarily concerned with modes of expression, literary style, genre and typography. Finally, there has been a tendency to stress both the Diggers' continued significance and the relevance of Winstanley's writings for modern political activists and commentators responding to the challenges of addressing perceived class-based inequalities, widening participation in the democratic process, the 'transition from an agrarian to an industrial society' in parts of the Third World, as well as environmental damage to our planet caused by human activity.

By embracing the first five approaches and acknowledging the sixth, this essay fits neatly into a collection focused on radicalism in early modern England. For it not only reaffirms Glen Burgess's point that 'context matters to understanding the history of radicalism', but also partly considers whether it is still appropriate to posit a single continuous English radical tradition – or even multifaceted traditions – stretching from the peasants' rising of 1381 through to the Chartists.¹ This is vital for there is some agreement that what largely distinguished the English Revolution from baronial revolts, religious wars, rebellions and indeed what has been termed the 'general crisis' shaking mid-seventeenth century Ireland, France, Catalonia, Portugal, Naples and elsewhere was radicalism.² Even so, as is usually recognised, revolutionary England (that supposed '*Island of great Bedlam*') was never an island unto itself.³ Accordingly – and with some measure of success – scholars

¹ Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 1–3; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 2–9; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English revolution', pp. 63–9.

² Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660', *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): p. 213; G. Burgess, 'On Revisionism: an analysis of early Stuart historiography in the 1970s and 1980s', *HJ*, 33 (1990): pp. 625–7.

³ William Erbury, *The Mad Mans Plea* (London, 1653), p. 8.

have attempted to assess how and in what ways the changing political, religious, social, economic, cultural and intellectual landscapes of early modern continental Europe influenced comparable developments in England. Thus there have been studies tracing the roots of English revolutionary experiences and the manner in which they were articulated to a number of entangled yet identifiable traditions which, through a process of recovery, dissemination, reinterpretation and accretion, were continually evolving: humanism; biblical criticism; natural law; classical republicanism; ancient theology; occult and scientific learning; medical knowledge; Germanic mysticism; apocalypticism; and Christian primitivism. These traditions, among others, traversed, shaped or were themselves born out of the defining events of the period, namely the Renaissance, Voyages of Exploration, Magisterial and Radical Reformations, Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years War.

Following in the footsteps of contemporary heresiographers and polemicists, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century students of theosophy, literature and Protestant nonconformity began debating whether mainstream English Puritanism and, on its fragmentation, the multitude of sects it spawned was fundamentally a continental import or rather a home-grown phenomenon with its own peculiarities. Unsurprisingly, the subject was extensively investigated by denominationally committed historians who tended to be preoccupied with constructing complicated and unbroken genealogies of religious dissent thereby further legitimating received accounts of believers' sufferings and martyrdom.⁴ Marxist historians and a number of politically committed scholars, influenced to debatable degrees at various times during their careers by broadly left-wing ideas, likewise legitimated their doctrines by stressing supposed ideological antecedents. By turns organised and haphazard, this occasionally collective project was intended to reinforce links between an imagined past and present-day exigencies ('the battle of ideas today') by creating histories about aspects of an assumed 'heritage' of which the 'English people' had been 'robbed'. Here, however, the initial impulse was to recover an indigenous lineage: a 'progressive rationalist' native English tradition.⁵ Characterised by an unashamedly teleological, anachronistic, anti-clerical and anti-imperialist thrust, these sympathetic accounts with their unshakeable faith in class conflict driving historical processes and unwarranted secularisation of their subjects bore the brunt of the so-called revisionist backlash in all its varieties.

⁴ P. Collinson, 'Towards a broader understanding of the early dissenting tradition', in P. Collinson, *Godly People. Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), pp. 527–31.

⁵ R. Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians, 1880–1980: Part One', *New Left Review*, 120 (1980): pp. 26–8, 39–42, 50–52, 74; A. MacLachlan, *The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England. An Essay on the Fabrication of Seventeenth-Century History* (Basingstoke, 1996); A. Hessayon, 'Fabricating radical traditions', in M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/hessayon2_radical.html>, 1–6.

Although the revisionist shift in emphasis from tension to consensus was accompanied by a welcome reincorporation of religious beliefs into a grand narrative that had gradually been transformed from a bourgeois revolution into the breakdown of royal and ecclesiastical authority in the three Stuart kingdoms, there were drawbacks. Not least of these was the marginalisation of radicalism and a reluctance to take seriously the possibility that its mid-seventeenth-century manifestation may, as Christopher Hill proposed, have had deep if largely underground roots. Reconceived as a series of moments in context rather than a continuous tradition, it was nonetheless conceded that these wars of religion in the Atlantic Archipelago had ideological components and, moreover, that certain contemporaries held beliefs stemming from the Magisterial and Radical Reformations as well as early Christianity.⁶ Thus Jonathan Scott identified practical Christianity, derived from the New Testament and comprising the ‘core social agenda of the European radical reformation’, as the crucial element of a shared vocabulary expressed in otherwise divergent ‘Leveller’, ‘Digger’, ‘Ranter’ and ‘Quaker’ publications. Consequently, he envisaged the English Revolution as ‘the last and greatest triumph of the European radical reformation’.⁷

On their rediscovery in the nineteenth century – first by Liberal, Socialist and Marxist historians, and then Protestant nonconformists – the Diggers were not just appropriated, their image successively refashioned in the service of new political doctrines, but contextualised. Hence Eduard Bernstein, regarded as the ‘first and greatest of the heresiarchs of Marxism’, delineated the 1549 East Anglian revolts (Kett’s rebellion), noting the ‘communistic tendencies’ of one sixteenth-century Anabaptist faction together with their influence on the Familists. In addition, Bernstein connected the Quakers with German Anabaptists and mystics such as Jacob Boehme, and suggested that Winstanley’s *The Law of Freedom* was a utopian vision displaying unmistakable familiarity with Thomas More’s *Utopia*.⁸ Similarly, the Quaker Lewis Berens, who dedicated his work on the Digger movement to the Society of Friends, included chapters on the Reformation in Germany and England where he linked the common demands of the English peasantry in 1381 to those of the German peasantry in the Twelve Articles of 1525. Moreover, it seemed

⁶ C. Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers’, in C. Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume Two: Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Brighton, 1986), pp. 89–116; G.E. Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities in mid Seventeenth-Century England. III. Varieties of Radicalism’, *TRHS*, 5th series, 37 (1988), pp. 2–3, 6–7; J.C. Davis, ‘Against Formality: One Aspect of the English Revolution’, *TRHS*, 6th series, 3 (1993): pp. 271–2.

⁷ J. Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 247–68; P. Baker, ‘Rhetoric, Reality and the Varieties of Civil War Radicalism’, in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War: Conflicts and Contexts, 1640–49* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 208, 216–17.

⁸ E. Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism. Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1895), trans. H.J. Stenning (1930; reprinted, Nottingham, 1980), pp. 19–25, 52, 115, 186, 214, 230.

to Berens that Winstanley had been 'greatly influenced' by Familist teaching.⁹ Afterwards David Petegorsky completed a study of Winstanley's philosophy which was distributed through an anti-fascist organisation called the Left Book Club. He thought the 'social roots' of ideas held by Winstanley and the Interregnum sects lay in the 'religion of the common people': politically immature, medieval popular movements like the English Lollards and German Anabaptists. Nor were these distinct 'streams' of mystical theology since German refugees fleeing religious persecution in their homeland had brought the vivifying spirit of writings by Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenckfeld and Boehme to England. Popularised as these were through translations in print and manuscript, Petegorsky considered it possible to detect Boehme's and the Familists' 'particular influence' on Winstanley while simultaneously insisting that he owed his religious doctrines more to the 'environment of the age' than to any individual thinker.¹⁰ In the same vein, Christopher Hill, then a member of the Communist party of Great Britain, who had studied at Moscow and familiarised himself with Soviet interpretations of the Interregnum, grouped Winstanley's writings with those 'communist theories which have appeared with increasing maturity in all the great middle-class revolutions'. That is to say, doctrines disseminated by Thomas Müntzer, the Protestant reformer executed during the German Peasants' War, and Jan of Leiden, king of the Anabaptists that had seized the town of Münster in Westphalia.¹¹

Another admirer of the pre-Stalinist Soviet Union, the journalist and broadcaster Henry Brailsford, pronounced Winstanley's *The New Law of Righteousnes* 'a Communist Manifesto written in the dialect of its day'. He too compared Winstanley's *Law of Freedom*, an eloquent 'sketch of a classless society', with More's *Utopia*, connecting Winstanley's ideas with sixteenth-century Communist thought – particularly the fraternal, 'left-wing' Anabaptist communities of Switzerland, the Rhineland and Moravia; a revolutionary sermon by Müntzer (even if it was 'unlikely that Winstanley had ever heard of him'); the 'heroic tragedy' that ensued at Münster; and the 'pacifist', persecuted underground heretical sect the Family of Love.¹² Hill himself later underlined the role of Familists in keeping alive Anabaptist theories in the 'Elizabethan underworld' before they fused with native lower class agrarian communist ideas, resurfacing in the 'freedom of the 1640s'.¹³ While Hill's idealised depiction of

⁹ L. Berens, *The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth as Revealed in the Writings of Gerrard Winstanley* (London, 1906), pp. 1–22.

¹⁰ D. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War: A Study of the Social Philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley* (1940; reprinted, Stroud, 1995), pp. 64, 68–9, 125–6, 150–51.

¹¹ L. Hamilton (ed.), *Gerrard Winstanley. Selections from his Works* (London, 1944), p. 4.

¹² H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (1961; 2nd edn, ed. C. Hill, Nottingham, 1983), pp. 31–3, 524, 659–60.

¹³ C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1984 edn), pp. 114–15, 134.

Winstanley as a precursor of nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialism and author of the world's 'first communist political programme' was attacked for its political subtext,¹⁴ Winstanley remained an audacious rational utopian communist for some literary critics, standing firmly within a radical Protestant tradition that went back by way of the Familists, General Baptists and Dutch Mennonites to Müntzer and Münster on the Continent, and John Wycliffe and the Lollards in England.¹⁵ Indeed, though Andrew Bradstock detected what he believed to be two 'false assumptions' weakening the argument that Winstanley was, or became, a secular thinker, he still situated Winstanley within a 'small but vocal tradition' on the fringes of the 'professing Christian church'. These oppositional voices, echoing from Lollards to Hussites, through the radical Protestant reformers and sects of the English Revolution down to Liberation Theologians today, challenged 'perceived conservative and reactionary interpretations of the faith'.¹⁶ More recently, John Gurney has argued that Winstanley should be seen as emerging from both a vibrant, fluid and heterogeneous 'puritan underground', and a 'radical and heterodox tradition of religious mysticism' embracing texts by the Family of Love's founder Hendrick Niclaes, Boehme and the anonymous *Theologia Germanica*.¹⁷

Despite differences in emphases, sophistication and quality of research, there is a common thread running through this assorted scholarship: it shares – and to some extent is unavoidably shaped by – the same concerns that confronted contemporary heresiographers and polemicists. Their outpourings, which were often modelled upon and positioned within a long line of anti-heretical writing, amply illustrate the manifold difficulties with heresiography as a genre. Determined to extirpate reported doctrinal errors compilers could be alarmist and self-serving, attaching labels – even when inappropriate – to facilitate categorisation, purposefully blurring or ignoring subtle doctrinal distinctions, sometimes failing to recognise novel beliefs because of their tendency to compare what they saw with earlier

¹⁴ C. Hill (ed.), *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 9–10, 34, 68 n. 62; Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 2, pp. 194–200; cf. J.C. Davis, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Restoration of True Magistracy', *P&P*, 70 (1976): pp. 76–93; L. Mulligan, J.K. Graham and J. Richards, 'Winstanley: A Case for the Man as He Said He Was', *JEH*, 28 (1977): pp. 57–75.

¹⁵ T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger. A Literary Analysis of Radical Ideas in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), pp. 2, 48–50; R. Kenny (ed.), *The Law of Freedom in a Platform or, True Magistracy Restored* (New York, 1973), pp. 19–20, 22, 23.

¹⁶ A. Bradstock, 'Sowing in Hope: the relevance of theology in Gerrard Winstanley's political programme', *Seventeenth Century*, 6 (1991): pp. 194–5; A. Bradstock, *Faith in the Revolution: The Political Theologies of Müntzer and Winstanley* (London, 1997).

¹⁷ J. Gurney, *Brave Community. The Digger Movement in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 90–91, 94–7; cf. N. Smith, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Literature of Revolution', in A. Bradstock (ed.), *Winstanley and the Diggers, 1649–1999* (London, 2000), pp. 51–2.

Christian heresies. Thus Anabaptist excesses, including the seizure of Münster, were revived through print as cautionary atrocity stories. Published as warnings against introducing religious toleration in England, these pamphlets paralleled the infamous exploits of Thomas Müntzer and Jan of Leiden with contemporary events to highlight the threat to Church and State from Anabaptism, which was likened to a contagion that had infected limbs of the body politic and was spreading to its heart.¹⁸ In the same way, the Presbyterian minister Richard Baxter linked the Quakers to their ‘German Brethren’ the Paracelsians and Behmenists, assuming that with their forerunners – ‘Seekers, Ranters, and Anabaptists’ – they were part of a Popish confederacy let loose by the Devil.¹⁹ The Cambridge Platonist Henry More on the other hand looked to Holland, believing the Quakers were ‘descended’ from Nicolaes and that Familists had entered England through the wiles of Popish priests and their emissaries.²⁰

Mindful of this historiographic legacy, and of the challenging nature of Winstanley’s and his fellow Diggers’ texts, as well as the often brief and predominantly hostile nature of much of the remaining evidence, I have nonetheless suggested elsewhere that it is fruitful to consider the Diggers as an offshoot from the main branch of the General Baptists, with roots going back to the Radical Reformation. Furthermore, the outlines of Winstanley’s spiritual journey can be reconstructed with confidence. Beginning in either childhood, adolescence or some point in adulthood, he was a puritan, then perhaps a separatist; then, it can be inferred, a General Baptist; then he dispensed with the outward observance of gospel ordinances (like a ‘Seeker’), before falling into a trance sometime between 16 October 1648 and 26 January 1649. Though Winstanley’s puritan and Baptist phases can only be gleaned from reminiscences, they still provide a valuable insight into the evolution of his thought. So much so that the imprint of distinctive General Baptist tenets, especially in Winstanley’s first five publications, is both unmistakable and crucial for understanding the development of his ideas. The influence of Baptist precedents can be seen, for example, in Winstanley’s implementation of the doctrine of community of goods (Acts 4:32), with its striking resemblance to

¹⁸ Anon., *A Warning for England especially for London in the famous History of the Frantic Anabaptists* (1642); Anon., *A Short History of the Anabaptists of High and Low Germany* (London: Samuel Brown, 1642; reprinted, Robert Austin, 1647); Frederick Spanheim, *Englands Warning by Germanies Woe* (London: John Bellamie, 1646); Christoffel van Sichem, *Apocalypsis, or the Revelation Of certain notorious Advancers of heresie*, trans. John Davies (London: John Saywell, 1658), pp. 1–29; cf. Hughes, *Gangraena*, pp. 67, 72, 89.

¹⁹ Richard Baxter, *The Vnreasonableness of Infidelity* (London: Thomas Underhill, 1655), pt. iii, p. 155; Richard Baxter, *One Sheet against the Quakers* (London, 1657), pp. 1–2.

²⁰ M. Nicolson and S. Hutton (eds), *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends: 1642–1684* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 512–13.

sixteenth-century Hutterite practice in Moravia, together with the Diggers' use of emissaries to spread the good news that they had begun laying the foundations of universal freedom (Matthew 28:19).²¹ Here I will examine Winstanley's beliefs about universal redemption and particular election, which must be viewed in the light of a serious schism among Baptists. For, though denominational alignments did not harden arguably until autumn 1644, there were on the one hand followers of Calvinist doctrine who believed in the 'particular Election and Reprobation' of individuals (Particular Baptists), and on the other essentially maintainers of core Arminian or Remonstrant tenets who, while accepting particular election and denying free will, nevertheless taught the '*Universal Love of God to all*' and therefore the possibility of universal redemption (General Baptists).²² In addition, I will show how Winstanley's attitudes towards the Saturday and Sunday Sabbath, tithes, ministers, magistrates and violence position his teachings as on the whole budding forth from fertile General Baptist soil.

Particular Election and Universal Redemption

On the title-page of Winstanley's *The Mysterie of God, Concerning the whole Creation, Mankinde* (1648) was a biblical verse that, when laid open like an unsealed book, encapsulated his heterodox interpretation of accepted Calvinist teaching on soteriology and eschatology: '*And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion, the Deliverer, that shall turne away ungodlinessse from Jacob*' (Romans 11:26). The mystery of God to which Winstanley referred was to be made known to every man and woman after seven dispensations (Revelation 10:7), and had been revealed to God's servants (Revelation 1:1).²³ Winstanley explained that these seven dispensations corresponded to the seven angels of the Apocalypse (Revelation 8:2).²⁴ These dispensations, moreover, had been preordained by God before the foundation of the world and demarcated periods of history.²⁵ Five had already occurred. These were: first, the sentence of death as a consequence of Adam's disobedience of the Law of God when eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil

²¹ A. Hessayon, 'Early Modern Communism: The Diggers and Community of Goods', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 3, no. 2 (2009): pp. 1–49.

²² Thomas Lambe, *A Treatise of Particular Predestination* (London, 1642); [Thomas Lambe?], *The Fountaine of Free Grace Opened* (London, 1645); Luke Howard, *Love and Truth in plainness Manifested* (London: T. Sowle, 1704), p. 107; Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, from the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I* (2 vols, London: the editor and author, 1738–39), 1, pp. 173–4.

²³ Gerrard Winstanley, *The Mysterie of God* (London: Giles Calvert, 1649), title-page, pp. 11, 20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3, 2 Corinthians 3:6); second, the curse upon the serpent (Genesis 3:15), interpreted as a promise of mercy and redemption through Christ, who will deliver mankind from the bondage of death; third, God's covenant with Abraham, sealed by the token of circumcision (Genesis 17:9–10, Luke 1:55); fourth, the Law of Moses, which foreshadowed the Gospel; fifth, God's manifestation in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. The sixth had begun with God's appearance in the flesh of his Saints (Joel 2:28), and would continue until the 'perfect gathering up of the Elect' at the Resurrection or Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:12–15).²⁶ During this sixth great dispensation Winstanley counselled patience, informing those of God's Saints waiting sorrowfully in a sinful condition or spiritual wilderness that this was the 'gathering time' when the elect out of 'every nation, kindred, tongue & people' would be numbered and taken to dwell in the City, Sion, with the Lamb (Revelation 7:9, 21:23).²⁷ Only those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27), the 'scattered sheep of the House of *Israel*' (Matthew 10:6), would enter the City at this hour. Through the power of anointing these believers would be united and knitted together with Christ, baptised into one mystical body (1 Corinthians 12:13). Meanwhile, in these latter days (Daniel 10:14) God had granted a time, time and a half time to the serpent (Revelation 12:14) – which Winstanley identified with the Beast or Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17:4–6) – to make war on the Saints. The Beast would tread the holy City underfoot for 42 months (Revelation 11:2). Those whom God had not chosen were being cast into a lake of everlasting fire (Matthew 18:8, Revelation 20:15) to endure not eternal but temporary punishment. At the last hour God, who is the tree of life (Revelation 22:1–2), would send forth a healing virtue to the nations (Revelations 21:24). Thus 'all *Israel*' would be saved (Romans 11:26), without exception, to 'partake of the glorious manifestation of the Sons of God'.²⁸ Then, at the seventh dispensation, which was yet to come, the mystery of God would be absolutely finished. The Son would deliver up the Kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24) and all God's work – the whole Creation, Mankind – would be redeemed; liberated from corruption, bondage, death and pain (Romans 8:21). Only the serpent, that is the humane nature within flesh which had sprung up as a weed in the Garden of Eden after God made Adam, would perish; cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 14).²⁹

Situating the 'violence, wrath, reproach, oppression, provocations and murders' suffered by the Saints within an apocalyptic framework, Winstanley was

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 13, 21–3, 29–32, 34.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 15, 18, 35–7, 43, 59; cf. Gerrard Winstanley, *The Saints Paradise* [1648], p. 24.

²⁸ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 14–15, 37–8, 43–4, 48; cf. Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 128–9; G. Sabine (ed.), *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley* (Ithaca, NY, 1941), pp. 445–6, 447, 454.

²⁹ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 6–7, 13–14, 27, 44.

therefore able to account both for the presence of religious persecution in England and anticipate its increased intensity, because the serpent's time was growing short.³⁰ His belief in universal redemption, however, was considered a doctrinal error. According to the provisions of an Ordinance for suppressing blasphemies and heresies, this offence was punishable by imprisonment if disseminated from 2 May 1648 and not renounced – which may explain why the first edition of *The Myserie of God* has an undated preface and bears no publisher's imprint.³¹ Furthermore, Winstanley's heterodox marriage of universal redemption with particular election appeared an irreconcilable combination. Acknowledging potential 'contradictions', he explained that, though God would 'save every one', this did not give people liberty to take 'pleasure in sin', to 'eat, drink, and be merry'. On the contrary, sinners would 'not escape punishment' since they would be cast into the 'everlasting fire', which Winstanley took to mean the dispensation of God's wrath rather than the 'material fire of purgatory'.³²

The continued significance Winstanley attached to Romans 11:26 can also be seen on the title-page of *The New Law of Righteousnes* (1649), which contains a partial reworking: 'This is Sion out of whom we are to expect the deliverer to come, that shall turn ungodlinesse from Jacob'.³³ Jacob, meaning following after or supplanter, was the younger of Isaac's twin sons by his wife Rebekah (Genesis 25:22–6). After wrestling with a man or angel, his name was changed to Israel, meaning ruling with God (Genesis 32:24–8, Hosea 12:4).³⁴ As Jacob was sometimes taken to be a synonym of Israel,³⁵ Winstanley should therefore be read as using twofold imagery here. First, he developed his belief in the salvation of all Israel by addressing this work to 'the twelve Tribes of *Israel* that are circumcised in heart, and scattered through all the Nations of the Earth' (cf. Revelation 7:4, Zechariah 7:14).³⁶ Second, he reaffirmed his conviction in particular election by expounding on the figure of Jacob and the struggle between the twins in the womb (Romans 9:6–13). These motifs were entwined in Winstanley's 'Epistle to the Reader' and require explanation.

Protestant exegetes commonly accepted that the Jewish people's misfortunes in the post-exilic period were attributable to their having crucified Christ and their rejection of the Gospel message. Winstanley's attitude was no different:

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 40–41, 47; cf. Gerrard Winstanley, *The Breaking of the day of God* (London, 1649), pp. 101, 102, 105, 111; Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 21, 41, 42.

³¹ C. Firth and R.S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660* (3 vols, London: Stationery Office, 1911), 1, p. 1135.

³² Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 14, 19–20, 50–53, 55.

³³ Gerrard Winstanley, *The New Law of Righteousnes Budding forth, in restoring the whole Creation from the bondage of the curse* (London, 1649), title-page; cf. Isaiah 59:20.

³⁴ Cf. Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 77–8.

³⁵ Cf. George Foster, *The Pouring Forth of the Seventh and Last Viall upon all Flesh* (1650), title-page, sig. a2v, p. 68.

³⁶ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, p. 149.

Jews could not behold God in Christ, calling Christ a deceiver, persecuting and ultimately killing him. For their evil deeds God cast off 'literal *Israel*', that is the descendants of Abraham who observed the Law of Moses.³⁷ These 'outward' Jews circumcised in the flesh were distinguished from 'inward' Jews circumcised in the heart (Romans 2:28–9). Inward Jews, whether of Jewish or Gentile ancestry were the 'Abrahamites' in whom the '*blessing of the most High*' remained (cf. Romans 4:9), the promised seed (Galatians 3:29) of whom it was said 'Salvation is of the Jews' (John 4:22). The blessing was the '*King of righteousness*' and '*Prince of peace*' (cf. Jeremiah 23:6, Isaiah 9:6) that ruled in the body of Abraham, that is the inward Abraham rather than the imperfect outward fleshy man called Abraham. Yet the blessing was also the 'seed of Abraham' (Galatians 3:16), the '*Saviour*' which lay hidden, '*hated, persecuted and despised*' within the twelve tribes of Israel circumcised in heart. In other words, Winstanley envisaged the blessing as the indwelling Christ which was now '*breaking forth*' to liberate the righteous from the '*dark clouds of inward bondage, and outward persecution*' (cf. Romans 8:21), spreading forth from them to fill the earth and '*restore all things*', thereby freeing '*the whole Creation from the curse*' under which it groaned (Genesis 3:17, Romans 8:22).³⁸ Doubtless it was identifying with Jews in an inward Pauline sense as inheritors of the blessed promised seed that reportedly prompted Winstanley's fellow Digger William Everard to declare that he was 'of the Race of the Jewes'.³⁹ Similarly, Winstanley signed himself '*a waiter for the consolation of Israel*' (Luke 2:25) and expecting Israel's imminent return from the mystery of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:5–6), 'self-seeking oppressing government' and outward observance of ordinances, he instructed the twelve tribes to stand still in this '*time of Jacobs trouble*' (Jeremiah 30:7). For the Lord himself, Reason, would deliver the Spirit within Israel from the oppressive burden of cursed flesh by burning up the outward body, a compound made of the four elements – fire, water, earth, air – in which the curse rested.⁴⁰

Conceiving of the blessing as the indwelling Christ hidden within inward Jews, Winstanley also regarded it as synonymous with Jacob. For Winstanley, Jacob was Christ, the '*elect or chosen one*'; Esau, his elder twin, the '*rejected one, the reprobate*' (cf. Romans 9:13). Jacob and Esau, moreover, represented the two Adams within mankind striving to rule in the Kingdom of heaven, interpreted as Christ within (cf. Luke 17:21). Esau, as the elder brother, was the disobedient Adam or 'son of bondage' (Galatians 4:22) that filled every man with 'sin and filth' (Romans 5:19). This Adam was within every man and woman, and was the first power to 'act and rule in every man'. Hence Esau was associated with the 'wisdom

³⁷ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, sig. A2v, p. 19; Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, p. 43; Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, p. 13; Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 113, 160, 215.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–54.

³⁹ Anon., *The Declaration and Standard of the Levellers of England* (1649), p. 2.

⁴⁰ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 152–3, 154, 163, 189, 191, 195.

and power of flesh' that initially reigned over mankind, with beastly, 'proud and covetous flesh' that delighted in 'unrighteous pleasures' (cf. 2 Peter 2:12–13). Consequently he sold both his 'birth-right and blessing' to Jacob (Genesis 25:27–34, Genesis 27:30–36, Hebrews 12:16–17), and his downfall was approaching. Jacob, that is the second Adam or 'son of the free-woman' (Galatians 4:22), had been downtrodden and in servitude a '*long time*'. Now, however, the younger brother was supplanting the elder (Isaiah 44:1), rising up in glory as the spirit within the hearts of inward Jews to rule in righteousness and 'restore all things'. Jacob's dominion would reach 'from one end of heaven to the other' (Luke 17:24) and would be like a 'spreading power of light' dispersing darkness and covering the earth with the 'knowledge of himself'. Nor would this blessing bring loss and misery to anyone (Genesis 18:18), for his law would be established in love and bring peace to the whole Creation.⁴¹

Winstanley thus envisioned Jacob and Esau as types, as figures in the Old Testament that foreshadowed aspects of the Christian dispensation. Esau – the reprobate – corresponded to sinful flesh ruled by the first Adam, whereas Jacob – the elect – corresponded to the spirit within ruled by the second Adam, Christ. But in a bold step Winstanley went further still. For he maintained that Esau's dominion was supported by university-trained clergymen and public preachers, 'false Teachers' and betrayers of Christ who, while deceitfully promising an outward heaven above the skies, picked the purses of their unsuspecting flocks.⁴² Conversely, Jacob would sweep away 'all the refuge of lies, and all oppressions' (Isaiah 28:17), and 'make the earth a common treasury'. The 'poor despised people' (cf. James 2:6) trodden upon like dust and stones had begun to '*receive the Gospel*', so that not the meek but '*The poor shal inherit the earth*' (cf. Matthew 5:5).⁴³ Eventually, Winstanley condemned monarchy as well for making the 'elder brethren freemen in the Earth, and the younger brethren slaves'. Indeed, in *The Law of Freedom in a platform* (preface dated 5 November 1651) he considered 'Kingly Government' – equated with the 'great Man of Sin' (2 Thessalonians 2:3) – to be supported by the central pillar of Calvinist doctrine, the double decree which made:

one brother a Lord, and another a servant, while they are in their Mothers womb, before they have done either good or evil: This is the mighty Ruler, that hath made the Election and Rejection of Brethren from their birth to their death, or from Eternity to Eternity.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 149, 150, 165, 173, 176–7, 178–80, 187, 189–90, 213, 228, 237.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 178–9, 226–7, 240.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 188–90, 209; cf. Winstanley, *New Law of Righteousnes*, title-page.

⁴⁴ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 530, 381, 568.

The Saturday and Sunday Sabbath

Winstanley's use of types was widespread, extending to his understanding of Mosaic Law. Christians from Thomas Aquinas onwards conventionally divided the Law of Moses into three categories – the moral, judicial and ceremonial. This Law was believed to have been given by God to Moses, beginning with the Decalogue on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1–17), then supplemented and codified in the remainder of the Pentateuch. The moral law was derived from the Ten Commandments and all but a handful of Christians regarded it as inviolate. Judicial laws, according to Aquinas, 'did not bind for ever, but were annulled by the coming of Christ'; a sentiment with which the majority of Christians agreed. Nevertheless, Aquinas thought that it was not prejudicial to Christian faith for a sovereign to enact legislation based on these judicial laws, so long as they were not observed as if 'they derived their binding force through being institutions of the Old Law'. Both Calvin's advocacy of the death penalty for blasphemy and the Parliamentary Ordinance of May 1648 against the same offence can be seen as instances of Protestant reformers turning to judicial laws for exemplars. Ceremonial laws such as dietary regulations and restrictions governing specific kinds of clothing were regarded by Aquinas as being both 'dead' and 'deadly' – that is, of having been cancelled with the coming of Christ, making it a mortal sin for Christians to observe them. The seventh of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England essentially reaffirmed this view: the Law given by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites did not bind Christian men, but no Christian man whatsoever was free from obeying the moral commandments.⁴⁵

As the fourth of God's Ten Commandments, the Sabbath was taken by certain English Protestant commentators from at least the mid-1590s to be '*properly and perpetually*' a moral law, rather than a ceremonial or partly moral, partly ceremonial law.⁴⁶ However, several notable separatist and Baptist Judaisers – Christians who adopted selected Jewish customs or religious rites – argued that following Jewish precedent the Sabbath should be celebrated on the seventh day of the week, Saturday, rather than the first day, Sunday.⁴⁷ Although Winstanley exhibited

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, prima secundæ partis, question 101, 'The ceremonial precepts in themselves', art. 1–4, question 104, 'What is meant by the judicial precepts', art. 3; P.D.L. Avis, 'Moses and the Magistrate: a Study in the rise of Protestant Legalism', *JEH*, 26 (1975): pp. 149–72.

⁴⁶ Henry Burton, *A brief Answer to a late Treatise of the Sabbath Day* (Amsterdam, 1635), p. 5; Robert Cleaver, *A Declaration of the Christian Sabbath* (London, 1625), pp. 50–89; R.L. Greaves, 'The origins of English Sabbatarian Thought', *SCJ*, 12 (1981): pp. 26, 31–2; P. Collinson, 'The Beginnings of English Sabbatarianism', in Collinson, *Godly People*, pp. 429–43.

⁴⁷ D. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden, 1988); B. Ball, *The Seventh-Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600–1800* (Oxford, 1994).

Judaising tendencies, particularly his love of spiritual Israel and later borrowings from Mosaic Law when laying out the foundations of his ideal republic, he was no defender of the Saturday Sabbath. Indeed, he regarded the Jewish Sabbath as a type, as an outward observance practised one day in seven by Jews that prefigured what ‘Gentile Christians’ would constantly ‘perform in the substance’. For the ‘Sabbath Day’ denoted a ‘Day of a Christians rest’ (Hebrews 4:8, cf. Colossians 2:16–17): that is, the daily ‘reign of Christ in and over the Saints’, or his ‘indwelling in the soul, and the souls indwelling in him’.⁴⁸ Consequently, Winstanley rebuked ministers for enforcing observance of the Sunday Sabbath with the magistrates’ power, endeavouring to compel people ‘to keep that day after the manner of the Jewish type’.⁴⁹ Profanation of the Sabbath, it should be stressed, was a serious matter during the English Revolution. So much so that the ‘Book of Sports’ – a royal initiative encouraging traditional Sunday pastimes like Morris dancing, bowls and football outside the hours of divine service – was publicly burned by the hangman on 10 May 1643 at Cheapside, London.⁵⁰ What is more, according to the provisions of an Ordinance of 8 April 1644, travelling and labouring on the Sabbath were punishable by fines of 10 shillings and 5 shillings respectively; less severe penalties than the original laws for the Massachusetts Bay Colony which had made Sabbath-breaking a capital offence (cf. Exodus 35:2).⁵¹

Following the Golden Rule of doing to others as you would be done unto (Matthew 7:12), Winstanley looked forward to turning the tables on the clergy. Then the power of the risen Christ would stone to death thoughts, studies and ‘imagination of flesh’, for these were the men ‘found gathering sticks upon this sabbath day’ (Numbers 15:32–6). Denouncing the clergy’s manipulation of the New Testament to uphold their trade, Winstanley insisted that keeping Sunday holy had not been a forced business but a ‘voluntary act of love’ among the Apostles who had tasted the ‘day of Christ’. Once this context is appreciated, the actions of five Diggers who began cultivating the earth on St George’s Hill one April Sunday in 1649 takes on extra significance since this appears to have been a calculated, even confrontational gesture. Certainly this unashamed Sabbath breach echoes Jesus’ teaching that it was lawful to do good on Sabbath days (Luke 6:5–10), and chimes with Winstanley’s conviction that Saints filled with the indwelling Christ were not bound by outmoded forms of Jewish worship but liberated from weekly Sabbath

⁴⁸ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 53–4; Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, p. 92.

⁴⁹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, p. 143.

⁵⁰ *CJ*, ii, 847–8; *LJ*, vi, 32, *LJ*, vi, 504–10; *Die Veneris 5 Maij 1643* (London, 1643), brs.; John Vicars, *A Sight of ye Trans-actions of these latter yeares Emblemized* (London, 1646), p. 21.

⁵¹ Firth and Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, 1, pp. 420–22; C. Durston, ‘“Preaching and sitting still on Sundays”: the Lord’s Day during the English Revolution’, in C. Durston and J. Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 205–25.

observance.⁵² This was reaffirmed in *The Law of Freedom* where Winstanley thought it ‘very rational and good’ that his Commonwealth should have a ‘*Day of Rest*’ one day in seven. Drawing on Mosaic Law in a manner akin to approved Protestant usage of judicial laws, that is as non-binding exemplars, Winstanley proposed three reasons why an unspecified day of the week should be set apart; first, it gave an opportunity for parishioners to mingle in fellowship; second, ceasing from labour refreshed human bodies and livestock; and third, it enabled ministers to communicate news and read the Law of the Commonwealth as well as allowing people the chance to make speeches and engage in disputations.⁵³

Tithes

Tithes were a sign of homage and had been given by the children of Israel to the Levites as tribute for their service in the tabernacle. Leviticus required that they consist of the tenth portion of all agricultural produce, fruit and livestock.⁵⁴ This ancient Jewish custom, practised for centuries by the Church, regulated in London by statute of Henry VIII and claimed not by donation but as of divine right, proved a source of bitter, protracted controversy. Shortly before the German Peasants’ War, for example, a renegade Carthusian monk named Otto Brunfels published *Von dem Pfaffen Zehenden (On Ecclesiastical Tithes)* (Strasbourg, 1524); a learned treatise of 142 theses arguing that tithes lacked any foundation in the New Testament. Those who compelled the poor to pay tithes, he declared, were ‘viler betrayers of Christ than Judas, yes worse than the godless priests of Baal’. In the summer of 1524 anti-tithe rebellions erupted all over southern Germany.⁵⁵ Similarly, with the outbreak of Civil War in England, removal of the church courts and sequestrations, resistance to the collection of tithes, hitherto sporadic, became widespread. On 8 November 1644, Parliament issued an Ordinance authorising Justices of the Peace in certain circumstances to commit defaulters to gaol. Opposition to the forced maintenance of ministers, however, grew fiercer. The General Baptist and future Leveller Richard Overton publicised the ‘abundance of Poore, Fatherlesse, Widdowes, &c.’ starving in every parish and advocated voluntary contributions as an alternative.⁵⁶ Petitions were organised and presented to the Lord Mayor of London and House of Commons urging the removal of the ‘tedious burthen’ of

⁵² Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 125, 141, 143, 265.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 562–3.

⁵⁴ Leviticus 27:30–32; Numbers 18:20–24; cf. Genesis 14:18–20, 28:22, Deuteronomy 14:22.

⁵⁵ J. Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), pp. 36, 46–7; L.P. Buck, ‘Opposition to Tithes in the Peasants’ Revolt: A Case Study of Nuremberg in 1524’, *SCJ*, 4 (1973): pp. 11–22.

⁵⁶ [Richard Overton], *The Ordinance for Tythes Dismounted* ([London], 1645), p. 22.

tithes, arguing that they were a Jewish ceremonial law and had been abrogated with the coming of Christ.⁵⁷

Winstanley, too, reproved the clergy for enforcing the collection of tithes through the magistrate's power, despite lacking justification in either 'Reason' or 'Scripture'.⁵⁸ Condemning the 'selfish tyth-taking' preachers and all others that preached for hire, he compared their covetousness to Judas, betrayer of Christ.⁵⁹ In *An appeal to the House of Commons* (July 1649), Winstanley provided a historical explanation for the introduction of tithes to England, arguing that they had been brought in with the Norman Conquest so that William I could pay his debts to the Papacy and clergy, the latter having tried to persuade the people to embrace the Conqueror through their preaching. By including tithes among the burdensome Norman laws imposed upon the English, Winstanley was therefore able to suggest both that royal authority was buttressed by the 'Norman-Clergy' and that these mercenary 'oppressing Tith-mungers' were available to the highest bidder, whether Catholic or Protestant, Royalist or Republican.⁶⁰ In *The Law of Freedom*, Winstanley connected the Norman Conqueror's oppressive power, which stemmed from covetousness and pride, with Samuel's warning to the Israelite elders against setting up a king. For it was here that the 'burden of Tythes' placed upon the shoulders of the 'Commoners of England' – a tenth of 'all profits' from their estates given to the clergy – had begun (1 Samuel 8:15).⁶¹ Interestingly, the anonymous author of *Light shining in Buckinghamshire* (1648) and *More Light shining in Buckinghamshire* (1649) cited the same scriptural verses when blaming kings for establishing tithes and outlining the injustices of regal tyranny from Nimrod (Genesis 10:8–10) to the Israelite monarchy through to the 'Norman Bastard William'.⁶²

⁵⁷ Anon., *The Inditement of Tythes* (London, 1646), p. 6; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (3 vols, London, 1646), 1, p. 30; Anon., *The Countreys Plea against Tythes* (London, 1647), p. 5; Anon., *The Husbandmans Plea against Tithes* (London, 1647), pp. 8–9; Anon., *To the Right Honourable the Commons of England in Parliament assembled. The humble Petition of Thousands of wel-affected persons inhabiting the City of London* (1648), brs.

⁵⁸ Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 92, 117; Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 130, 143, 470.

⁵⁹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 194, 206, 233.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 311–12, 333, 335, 357–8, 387, 429; G.E. Aylmer, 'England's Spirit Unfolded, or an Incouragement to take the Engagement. A Newly discovered pamphlet by Gerrard Winstanley', *P&P*, 40 (1968): p. 11.

⁶¹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 504, 510, 522, 523, 532, 561.

⁶² *Ibid.*, *Winstanley*, pp. 612–13, 630–31.

Anticlericalism

Winstanley's anticlericalism pervades his writings.⁶³ In *The Breaking of the Day of God* he regarded the various forms of Church government as branches of the beast that was waging war against God's holy people. This 'Bastardly', oppressive human authority was hypocritically persecuting the Saints who worshipped the Lamb, 'God in Man', enforcing religious conformity through observance of outward fleshy forms. Nor was this done according to Scripture, but by imposition of the Canons of 1604 and then the Directory for Public Worship (4 January 1645). Yet these ecclesiastical laws did not succeed in suppressing wickedness and ungodliness.⁶⁴ Exercising a monopoly on preaching, proud learned scholars trained in 'humane letters' were preventing humble fishermen, shepherds, husbandmen and tradesmen – latter-day Apostles – from speaking about their spiritual experiences and revealing 'truths' which they had 'heard and seen from God' (Acts 4:20). Now, however, some clergymen would burn their books, forsake their comfortable quarters, and deny their ecclesiastical trade to join with the Saints and wait upon God.⁶⁵ Continuing in this vein, Winstanley subsequently denounced preaching as a trade, comparing preachers who did not speak of God from experience to 'clouds without rain' (Proverbs 25:14). With their temporal livings, these hirelings professing a 'literal' Gospel stood in opposition to the 'ministry of the Gospel' that God had put into men's hands (cf. John 10:12). Indeed, they were 'enemies' to the 'Spirit of truth' that had inspired the Prophets and Apostles (John 14:17).⁶⁶

In *Truth Lifting up its head above scandals* Winstanley adopted a catechetical format, telling his readers that, although church attendance was voluntary, the state could not force people to either hear clerical interpretations of scripture or maintain ministers by tithes. Furthermore, clergymen were not empowered to determine doctrinal errors. Winstanley concluded with a condemnation of ten outward ordinances whose observation he considered unwarranted; church services conducted on certain days at particular times according to custom, rather than when ministers were filled with the power of prayer; preaching not from inward experience but knowledge gained through hearing, reading and studying; praying

⁶³ F. Stripp, 'The Anti-Clericalism of Gerrard Winstanley', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 23 (1954): pp. 188–201; J.F. Maclear, 'Popular Anticlericalism in the Puritan Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 17 (1956): pp. 457–61; Hill (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 19, 42–4; G. Sanderson, 'The Digger's apprenticeship: Winstanley's early writings', *Political Studies*, 22 (1974): p. 455; Hill, 'Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', pp. 188, 192; G. Shulman, *Radicalism and Reverence. The Political Thought of Gerrard Winstanley* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 95–9; Gurney, *Brave Community*, p. 98.

⁶⁴ Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 73, 84–5, 88, 128, 133–4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 124, 130; cf. *The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (London, 1644), title-page.

⁶⁶ Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 2, 11–12; cf. Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 33–4.

with words spoken before and after sermons rather than in silence; expounding Scripture for financial gain; compelling people to attend church services by misusing the magistrates' power; enforcing parish boundaries and the provision of tithes; keeping the Sunday Sabbath; administering communion – a mere 'table gesture' – to a 'mixed company' of parishioners; infant baptism; preaching the Gospel and persecuting the 'Spirit within' that had made Moses (a shepherd), Amos (a fruit gatherer), the Apostles (fishermen) and Christ (a carpenter) preachers.⁶⁷

Reiterating his invective against the clergy in *The New Law of Righteousnes*, Winstanley also drew a comparison between the 'bitter' 'zealous Scribes and Pharisees' that had killed Christ (Matthew 23:14–15, 23–33) and his latter-day betrayers – subtle, proud, fleshy preachers and teachers motivated by greed, that were hindering Christ from rising within the cloudy hearts of his Saints. These deceitful Pharisees of Winstanley's own age, who despised poor men and women that spoke of God from an 'inward testimony', calling them 'Locusts, factious, blasphemers, and what not', would be stoned out of their pulpits (cf. Leviticus 24:16) and whipped out of God's Temple in the manner of Jesus driving the moneychangers out of the temple at Jerusalem and overthrowing their tables (John 2:15).⁶⁸ For their 'fine language' was but 'a husk without the kernall', 'words without life'; their stinking outward religious services, preaching, praying and public worship an 'abomination to the Lord'.⁶⁹ In *A New-years Gift for the Parliament and Armie* (January 1650), Winstanley envisaged 'Tything-priests' as a branch of 'Tyrannical Kingly power'.⁷⁰ Though he came to identify clerical power with one of the four beasts that Daniel saw rising up out of the sea (Daniel 7:3),⁷¹ Winstanley returned to the relationship between monarchical and clerical power in *The Law of Freedom*. Singling out 'old formal ignorant Episcopal Priests' as bitter enemies of the new Commonwealth, he traced the origins of a 'National Ministry' to the Norman Conquest.⁷²

Magistracy and Magistrates

Although Scripture required Christians to render 'unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's' (Matthew 22:21) and submit to 'the powers that be' (Romans 13:1), Protestant reformers had developed arguments concerning the duty of obedience and concomitant rights of resistance. Calvin, for instance, suggested that 'unwitting agents' or 'manifest avengers' were raised up by God to deliver the people from calamity, while 'popular magistrates' were appointed to curb regal tyranny. He also

⁶⁷ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 130, 138–9, 142–5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 187, 200, 206, 208, 213–14, 224, 240, 339, 409, 463, 466.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 372, 381.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 466, 469.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 504, 522–3.

carefully mapped out separate spiritual and temporal jurisdictions, distinguishing between complementary ecclesiastical and civil powers. According to Calvin, the Church was to refuse unrepentant sinners communion but had no right to use the sword to punish, restrain or fine lawbreakers, nor to imprison them. Christian magistrates, on the other hand, were required 'to purge the Church of offences by corporal punishment and coercion'.⁷³ Calvin's attitude contrasted with that maintained in *Brüderliche vereynigung etzlicher kinder Gottes, siben Artickel betreffend* (*Brotherly Union of a number of children of God concerning Seven Articles*) (1527), probably by the Anabaptist leader Michael Sattler and better known as the Schleithem Articles. The sixth of these declared that, whereas secular rulers had wielded the sword under Mosaic Law to punish and kill the wicked, the sword was now 'outside the perfection of Christ'. Consequently, magistrates were forbidden from using it to enforce law and order. Indeed, it did not befit Christians, whose weapons and armour were spiritual – truth, righteousness, peace, faith, holiness, and the Word of God – to serve as magistrates, because worldly affairs were governed by the flesh.⁷⁴ This controversial position was to be thrown back in the Baptists' faces as one of several political errors attributed to them by Daniel Featley in *The Dippers dipt* (London, 1645): first, people may 'depose their magistrates and chief rulers'; second, Christians with a good conscience could not bear the office of magistrate; third, none were permitted to administer oaths; and fourth, criminals should not be put to death.⁷⁵ Distancing themselves from some of these charges as well as unfavourable comparisons with the licentiousness of the Anabaptists of Münster, seven Particular Baptist churches in London issued *The Confession of Faith* (London, 1644). Modelled on the Separatist Confession of 1596, a revised second edition consisting of fifty-two articles was distributed outside the House of Commons in January 1646. The forty-eighth stated that civil magistracy was an 'Ordinance of God' set up by God for the punishment of evil doers, while the fiftieth affirmed that it was lawful for Christians to be magistrates or civil officers, and to take oaths. The intervening article, however, asserted that, in cases of religious persecution, Saints ought to obey God rather than

⁷³ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. L. Battles and ed. J. MacNeill (2 vols, 1559 edn), The Library of Christian Classics, vols 20–21 (Philadelphia, 1960), Book 4, chapter 11, sections 1–5; Book 4, chapter 20, sections 30–32.

⁷⁴ *Brotherly Union of a number of children of God concerning Seven Articles*, article 6, <http://members.iquest.net/~jswartz/schleithem/art6.html>; J. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (1976; Eugene, OR, 2002), pp. 117–22; H.-J. Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, trans. T. Johnson (London and New York, 1996), pp. 98–9, 153–4; C.A. Snyder, 'The Schleithem Articles in Light of the Revolution of the Common Man: Continuation or Departure?', *SCJ*, 16 (1985): p. 427.

⁷⁵ Daniel Featley, *The Dippers dipt* (London, 1645), pp. 29, 157–98; cf. Richard Byfield, *Temple defilers defiled* (London, 1645), p. 20; Edwards, *Gangraena*, pt 2, p. 161; Thomas Bakewell, *Heresie detected: Or the grand sectaries of These times confuted* (London, 1649), pp. 40–46.

magistrates.⁷⁶ Similarly, the General Baptist Edward Barber gave out a pamphlet at the Commons' door in September 1648 in which he argued for separation of ecclesiastical and civil powers. Magistrates were to punish disobedient sinners – the ungodly murderers, pimps, thieves, liars and perjurers – but had no authority to meddle with a gathered church.⁷⁷

Winstanley initially regarded the institution of magistracy as 'Gods Ordinance' (1 Peter 2:14, Romans 13:1–2), a 'higher power' which God had established to preserve peace in the world by being '*a terror to the wicked*' and outwardly punishing evil doers. Civil magistrates had been empowered with authority to govern lawfully and individuals were commanded to be obedient.⁷⁸ Since the days of the Roman emperor Nero, however, which Winstanley called the 'day of the Dragon' (Revelation 12:17), identifying this period as the first of the three and a half ages during which the Beast or rather the Serpent (humane nature) within flesh 'treads down the holy City' under foot (Revelation 11:2–3), there had been occasions when both magistrates and people had been deceived.⁷⁹ Through the subtle, crafty workings of the flesh, 'bestly' ecclesiastical power had stolen authority, reversing the progress of magistracy by making ecclesiastical laws which, lacking divine authority, punished the Saints and protected the wicked.⁸⁰ But now magistracy would run its right course to help God's Saints by putting Church government on Christ's shoulders (Isaiah 9:6), for the prophecy that magistrates '*shall love the people, and be nursing Fathers to them*' (Isaiah 49:23) was being fulfilled.⁸¹ Afterwards, having censured the clergy for enforcing the Sunday Sabbath, tithes, church attendance and doctrinal conformity by abusing the magistrate's power,⁸² Winstanley outlined how 'Imaginary government' would be overturned (Ezekiel 21:27) and replaced with 'True Government'. Ruled over by the Prince of darkness and power of Antichrist, imaginary government was unworthy of the name magistracy since it gave the gentry liberty to selfishly possess all land, to the detriment of poor commoners. Conversely, true government would be established when God, the King of righteousness, ruled over all with power and authority. Then pure magistracy – that is to say, the light of love, humility, reason, truth and peace – would shine forth among the nations uniting them in universal love.⁸³

⁷⁶ *CJ*, iv, p. 420; *A Confession of Faith of seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London* (London, 1646), articles 48–51; cf. *CJ*, vi, p. 178.

⁷⁷ Edward Barber, *An Answer to the Eight Quaeries propounded by the House of Commons* (1648), pp. 13–16; cf. Edward Barber, *An answer to the Essex watchmens watch-word* (London, 1649), p. 13.

⁷⁸ Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 83, 88, 103, 132, 135.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–63, 103.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83–4, 88, 132–5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, sig. A4, pp. 59, 135.

⁸² Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 102, 130, 143, 206, 241, 470.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 472–4.

Hoping to see ‘True Magistracy Restored’, Winstanley dedicated to Cromwell his design for ‘Commonwealths Government’: *The Law of Freedom*.⁸⁴

Capital Punishment, Holy War, Military Service and Non-resistance

Just as the polygenetic and variegated nature of early Anabaptism produced conflicting attitudes towards magistracy, so a number of Anabaptist leaders developed different positions regarding capital punishment, holy war, military service and non-resistance. Having separated themselves from the ungodly multitude by voluntarily joining a community of believers bound in fellowship by a second baptism, they wrestled, like Luther before them, with the problem of reconciling Mosaic Law with New Testament teachings on the sword and peace (Matthew 5, Matthew 10:34, Luke 22:38, Romans 13:4).⁸⁵ Thus, on the one hand, Balthasar Hubmaier, echoing a view commonplace among Protestant reformers that wielding the sword was necessary to preserve order in a sinful post-lapsarian world, argued that Christian government was a higher power set up by God for the punishment of evil-doers.⁸⁶ On the other, however, following Conrad Grebel’s teachings and the sixth of the Schleitheim Articles, some of the Swiss Brethren, Stäbler (men of the staff) and Menno Simons in his later writings rejected capital punishment (Exodus 20:13).⁸⁷ Similarly, influenced by Thomas Müntzer’s apocalyptic call to resist tyranny and wreak bloody vengeance upon the ungodly – including priests and monks – in the last days before the coming of Christ’s earthly kingdom, Hans Hut counselled sheathing the sword until God called upon the Saints to draw it as the Day of Judgment approached.⁸⁸ Again at Münster, Bernhard Rothmann exhorted the Anabaptists to take up arms and prepare for battle against the entire ‘Babylonian power’ and ‘godless establishment’.⁸⁹ Conversely a few Swiss Brethren refused military service as did the Hutterites, who professing love for their enemies also kept their consciences pure by repudiating payment of war

⁸⁴ Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a platform: Or, True Magistracy Restored* (London, 1652), title-page.

⁸⁵ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 36–40, 62–3, 77, 102–3, 123, 126–8, 147–8, 169, 176.

⁸⁶ H.S. Bender, ‘The Pacifism of the Sixteenth Century Anabaptists’, *CH*, 24 (1955): p. 124; C.-P. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525–1618. Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca and London, 1972), pp. 177–8; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 34, 65, 75, 89–90, 99, 105–8, 141–5, 214, 313; Goertz, *Anabaptists*, pp. 100–103.

⁸⁷ Bender, ‘Pacifism of Sixteenth Century Anabaptists’, pp. 121–3; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 102–3, 120–21, 129–30, 145, 169, 316–18; Goertz, *Anabaptists*, pp. 152–5.

⁸⁸ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 73–90, 152–6, 190; cf. Clasen, *Anabaptism*, pp. 160–66.

⁸⁹ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 227–52.

taxes.⁹⁰ Resonant of Erasmus's condemnation of mercenary warfare in *Querela Pacis* (1517), which was subsequently translated into German, it is significant both that Erasmus's pacifist writings effected Zwingli – at least before his death on the battlefield – and that Grebel's humanist education may have exposed him to these same texts.⁹¹ Indeed, Michael Sattler, together with the separatist Swiss Brethren, Hutterites and Menno, were all known for espousing the principle of non-resistance, advocating the use of spiritual weapons like God's word rather than devilish instruments of brutality such as the gun, sword or halberd; preferring martyrdom like sheep among the wolves ready for slaughter to forcefully defying tyrannical oppression.⁹²

Non-resistance was implicitly rejected by both the thirty-sixth of the Forty-two Articles (1553) and the thirty-seventh of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (1563), which declared that Christian men could lawfully bear weapons at the magistrate's command and serve in wars. The Protestant preacher Hugh Latimer also denounced it as a foolish Anabaptist misinterpretation of scripture (Ephesians 6:12), dismissing their contention that 'no Christian man maye fighte or goe to warrefare'.⁹³ Furthermore, drawing on Zwingli's successor Heinrich Bullinger and other sources, English heresiographers and controversialists sustained the association between Anabaptism, pacifism and non-resistance, some attributing it to a peculiar sect within the movement called 'Separatists'. It must be emphasised, however, that these same critics gave far greater attention to Anabaptist acts of violence.⁹⁴ Nor for all their doctrinal disputes were the majority of English Baptists pacifists, a number serving as soldiers and chaplains in Parliament's armies during the Civil Wars.⁹⁵ Indeed Baptists were involved

⁹⁰ *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren. Volume I.*, trans. The Hutterian Brethren (Rifton, New York, 1987), pp. 61–2, 236; Bender, 'Pacifism of Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', pp. 122, 125–6; Clasen, *Anabaptism*, pp. 174, 180–81; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 125, 176, 324; Goertz, *Anabaptists*, p. 104.

⁹¹ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 52–5, 57–8, 93, 95–6, 312, 314; cf. Bender, 'Pacifism of Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', pp. 119, 128–30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 122–3, 124–5, 126, 128; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 4–5, 101–2, 118–25, 161, 169, 173–5, 269, 300, 310–11, 318–19.

⁹³ Hugh Latimer, *Certain Godly Sermons* (London, 1562), fols 79v–80v; I. Horst, *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop, 1972), pp. 107, 174–5.

⁹⁴ William Wilkinson, *A Confutation of certaine Articles deliuered unto the Familye of Loue* (London, 1579), fol. 74v; Thomas Rogers, *The Faith, Doctrine, and Religion professed and protected in the Realm of England* (Cambridge, 1607), pp. 213–14; Featley, *Dippers dipt*, p. 32; Thomas Bakewell, *A Confutation of the Anabaptists* (London, 1644), sigs. C3v–C3r–2; Byfield, *Temple defilers*, p. 20; Anon., *The Anabaptists Catechisme* ([London]: R.A., 1645), p. 5; Spanheim, *Englands Warning*, p. 46; Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography* (London, 1654), p. 29.

⁹⁵ J.F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 25, 31.

in planning the abortive Fifth Monarchy rising of 1657 and, though they did not participate – despite their eagerness – as an organised group in the bloody insurrection of 1661, an enterprising pamphleteer nonetheless paralleled Münster with the ‘late massacres’ committed by the Fifth Monarchists.⁹⁶

Besides certain Anabaptist groups, the anti-Trinitarian Polish Brethren and English adherents of the Family of Love were the other sixteenth-century Protestant denominations notorious for non-resistance.⁹⁷ The latter reportedly condemned all wars and, according to a 1561 ‘confession’ of two alleged Familists taken at Guildford, initially prohibited the bearing of weapons but afterwards, to prevent identification as pacifists, permitted carrying staves.⁹⁸ Though Familists were notoriously skilful at dissembling, this problematic evidence can not be discounted since it resembles aspects of Nicolaes’s message. Nicolaes deplored killing and bloodshed, contrasting a promised spiritual land of peace where in the last times God would miraculously transport his holy people (the elect) to dwell peaceably in love, with a land of ignorance whose inhabitants fashioned physical swords, halberds, spears, bows, arrows, ordnance, guns and armour to wage destructive outward battles one against another.⁹⁹

Against this backdrop, Winstanley’s feelings about using violence – it is noteworthy that he did not fight in the Civil War – stand out. Disapproving of weapons which would destroy yet ‘never build up’ and peacefully expecting the fulfilment of the prophecy that ‘swords shall be beaten into plough irons’ and ‘spears into pruning hooks’ (Micah 4:3), he informed readers of *The New Law of Righteousnes* that ‘all these wars’, ‘killing one another’ and ‘destroying Armies’ were but ‘the rising up of the curse’ under whose burden the Creation groaned (Romans 8:22).¹⁰⁰ Then, in their first manifesto, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* (April 1649), the Diggers lamented the death and destruction wreaked to maintain tyrannical oppression, questioning the madness of violent self-destruction – which

⁹⁶ CSPD 1660–61, p. 471; Anon., *Munster Paralleld In the Late Massacres Committed by the Fifth Monarchists* (London, 1661); C. Burrage, ‘The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections’, *EHR*, 25 (1910): pp. 724–5, 728–9, 731, 736, 744.

⁹⁷ G. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (3rd edn, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. 1136–9, 1148, 1159–60, 1209–10; P. Brock, ‘Conscientious Objectors in the Polish Brethren Church, 1565–1605’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 70 (1992): pp. 670–87; J.D. Moss, ‘“Godded with God”: Hendrik Nicolaes and His Family of Love’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 71 (1981): pp. 15, 39, 52, 61.

⁹⁸ Moss, ‘“Godded with God”’, p. 71; John Rogers, *The displaying of an horrible secte of grosse and wicked heretiques, naming themselues the Family of loue* (London, 1578), sig. I.vv2–r3; Rogers, *Faith, Doctrine, and Religion*, p. 214.

⁹⁹ Hendrick Nicolaes, *Euangelium regni* ([Cologne, 1575?]), fol. 78v; Hendrick Nicolaes, *Terra pacis* ([Cologne, 1575?]), fols 6v, 14r, 56v; Hendrick Nicolaes, *Introductio. An introduction to the holy understanding of the Glasse of Righteousnes* ([Cologne, 1575?]), fol. 21r [2nd pagination].

¹⁰⁰ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 182, 204, 222, 247; cf. Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 136–7.

they likened to the Midianites slaying one another in confusion (Judges 7:22). Instead they declared their willingness to accept martyrdom, to offer their blood and, unarmed, sacrifice their lives to promote ‘universal Liberty’, trusting the Lord of Hosts to deliver them from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:5–6); ‘not by Sword or Weapon’ but by his ‘Spirit’ (cf. Zechariah 4:6).¹⁰¹ Accounts of their activities confirm that these were not hypocritical empty words, since the Diggers would neither fight nor ‘defend themselves by arms’, submitting meekly to authority.¹⁰² Moreover, there were several instances when they responded to violence with non-resistance. Hence when a Digger was punched during an argument he responded by turning the other cheek.¹⁰³ Winstanley claimed that Diggers imprisoned in Walton church were beaten by the ‘rude multitude’, and he also accused some infantry quartered at Walton of assaulting a man and thrashing a boy, stealing and setting fire to the Diggers’ house.¹⁰⁴ On 11 June 1649, four Diggers were brutally attacked by a group of local men wielding staves and clubs, all ritually dressed in women’s apparel.¹⁰⁵ Again, in April 1650, a poor man’s house was pulled down and his pregnant wife savagely kicked so that she miscarried. Finally, after six more of their houses were burned down, the Diggers were threatened with murder unless they abandoned their plantation.¹⁰⁶

Despite enduring these ‘Remarkable Sufferings’ brought about by the ‘great red Dragons power’ (Revelation 12:3), Winstanley remained unbowed.¹⁰⁷ Victories obtained by the sword were victories of the murderer, of the kind one slave got over another. Dragon had fought against dragon, beast against beast, covetousness and pride against covetousness and pride. Now, however, there was striving in England against ‘the Lamb, the Dove, the meek Spirit’ and ‘the power of love’. Though his enemies still fought with ‘fleshly weapons’ – the ‘Sword of Iron’ and covetousness – Winstanley warned that they would perish with them. For, armed with the ‘Sword of the Spirit which is love’ (cf. Ephesians 6:17), he regarded

¹⁰¹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 247, 253, 256, 266.

¹⁰² Anon., *Declaration and Standard of Levellers of England*, p. 3; *A Modest Narrative of Intelligence*, no. 3 (14–21 April 1649), p. 23; *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament*, no. 298 (16–23 April 1649), p. 2449; *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, no. 308, (17–24 April 1649), p. 1334; *The Moderate*, no. 41 (17–24 April 1649), sig. ff; *The Perfect Weekly Account* (18–25 April 1649), p. 455; *The Kingdomes Faithfull and Impartial Scout*, no. 13 (20–27 April 1649), p. 98; cf. K.V. Thomas, ‘Another Digger Broadside’, *P&P*, 42 (1969), p. 63.

¹⁰³ *Kingdomes Faithfull and Impartial Scout* (20–27 April 1649), p. 101; cf. Anon., *The Speeches of Lord Generall Fairfax and the Officers of the Armie to The Diggers at St Georges Hill in Surry* (London, 1649), p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 281–92, 380, 392; Gurney, *Brave Community*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁵ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 295–8, 393; Gurney, *Brave Community*, pp. 153–4.

¹⁰⁶ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 433–6.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

himself as a soldier of Christ engaged in a spiritual battle: 'Dragon against the Lamb', 'the power of love against the power of covetousnesse'.¹⁰⁸ What is striking here is the resemblance with early Quaker apocalyptic thought. They too believed themselves called to fight the Lamb's War in the last days. Nor was the Lamb's War to be a bloody struggle since, in the mind of the Quaker leader George Fox, it was an inward conflict between flesh and spirit; Fox's refusal to bear arms echoing Winstanley's opposition to using weapons in self-defence.¹⁰⁹

All the same, Winstanley never remained entirely opposed to using violence. In *The Law of Freedom*, he envisaged an ideal republic established on patriarchal foundations with a Parliament protected by a standing army that would preserve public order, quell insurrection and repel foreign invasion. This was a necessity.¹¹⁰ Partly modelled on pre-monarchical ancient Israel, his commonwealth had a legal system that punished transgressors not just with public humiliation, whipping, restricted diet, year-long servitude, an 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth, limb for limb' (Exodus 21:24), but also execution. Among the capital crimes were taking legal fees, maintained preaching, buying and selling land or produce within the Commonwealth, rape and murder. It was an executioner's job to decapitate, hang, shoot or whip the offender 'according to the sentence of Law'.¹¹¹

In December 1646, Robert Baillie, a Church of Scotland minister and supporter of Presbyterianism concerned by the 'great multitude' of 'seducing spirits' that in 'these very miserable times' were going forth into an evil world, penned the preface to his *Anabaptism, the Trve Fovntaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme, And the most of the other Errours, which ... doe trouble the Church of England* (London, 1647).¹¹² Despite the problematic nature of anti-heretical writing in general and its spectre in particular, which haunts scholarly efforts to unearth the roots of Winstanley's thought, there is much to be said for Baillie's analysis. For distinctive General Baptist tenets were, as we have seen, the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 271, 272, 286, 295, 297-8, 298, 329, 336, 346, 364, 379, 389-90, 437.

¹⁰⁹ J. Nickalls (ed.), *Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge, 1952; reprinted, London, 1986), pp. 65, 67, 384, 459, 676, 693; George Fox, *A declaration from the harmles & innocent people of God, called Quakers* (London, 1660); D. Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word. The Life and Message of George Fox (1624-1691)* (Richmond, IN, 1986), pp. 179-207; B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society', in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, pp. 152-3; H. Barbour, 'The "Lamb's War" and the Origins of the Quaker Peace Testimony', in H. Dyck (ed.), *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective* (Toronto and London, 1996), pp. 145-58.

¹¹⁰ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 286, 552-3, 561-2, 571-6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 192, 197-8, 536, 553-4, 591-2, 593, 594-5, 597-8, 599; R. Zaller, 'The Debate on Capital Punishment during the English Revolution', *American Journal of Legal History*, 31 (1987): pp. 126-44.

¹¹² Robert Baillie, *Anabaptism, the Trve Fovntaine* (1647), sig. *2.

Chapter 5

The Poetics of Biblical Prophecy: Abiezer Coppe's Late Converted Midrash

Noam Flinker

Abiezer Coppe has received a good deal of critical attention in recent decades, despite the fact that contemporary culture is often at a loss when dealing with the strange biblical quotations and paraphrases that appear throughout his texts. The significance of these references can help to shed light on Coppe's discourse, especially for those who have lost touch with so much of what Christopher Hill refers to as the 'Biblical Culture' of the seventeenth century.¹ I would extend Hill's general comment to suggest that Coppe's biblical rhetoric can be usefully understood in terms of the rabbinic reading practice known as 'midrash'. Seventeenth-century Christian Hebraists understood this term to intimate allegory and mysticism, both aspects of Coppe's unusual style which included his famous cryptic reference to himself as 'A late converted JEW'. At least one recent reader of rabbinic texts accounts for midrash in terms of intertextual readings of biblical passages. This practice is reminiscent of Coppe's quasi-mystical style which weaves together a rich tissue of biblical texts that parallel and extend his ideological messages, even when his allegories are deliberately ambiguous on the surface. His midrashic social critique becomes a hermeneutic journey with metaphors that take the reader back and forth between sign and signified.

A.L. Morton provided a most cogent introduction to Coppe and his fellow Ranters in 1970 and Christopher Hill made this material more readily available in books such as *The World Turned Upside Down* and *Milton and the English Revolution*. Others such as Nigel Smith, J. Colin Davis, Jerome Friedman, James Holstun, Clement Hawes and Nicholas McDowell have added to our understanding of Coppe's role just as some editions of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* have included passages from his works as one example of 'Voices from the War'. Andrew Hopton has even published a selection of Coppe's works.² Coppe's lyrical intensity has fascinated poets and scholars for many years.

¹ C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1994), pp. 3–44.

² A.L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution* (London, 1970); C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1984 edn), pp. 19, 25, 35–36; C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977); N. Smith (ed.), *A Collection of Ranter Writings*

Major British and American poets may have known of him. Someone like Allen Ginsburg, for example, may have consciously echoed Coppe's tirades. His *Howl* may owe something to lines from Coppe's *Fiery Flying Roll* such as: 'Once more, I say, own them [the poor, including beggars, prisoners, etc.]; they are yourself, make them one with you, or else go howling into hell; howle for the miseries that are coming upon you, howle'.³ Barry MacSweeney's volume of poems entitled *Ranter* implicitly owes something to Coppe.⁴

Some recent scholarship has focused on the unusual nature of Coppe's discourse. James Turner goes into some detail about Coppe's 'rapturous and intense Biblical rhetoric'.⁵ Tom Hayes claims that Coppe 'deploys the discourse of madness' by 'representing himself in his deliberate debasement of himself, by providing images of himself consciously abjecting himself, by showing how his unified, coherent self was shattered so that he could be reborn as a fragmented,

from the 17th Century (London, 1983); N. Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed. Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989); J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth, and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986); J. Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immorality, and Anarchy: The Ranters and the English Revolution* (Athens, OH, 1987); J. Holstun, 'Ranting at the New Historicism', *English Literary Renaissance*, 19 (1989): pp. 189–225; C. Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge, 1996); N. McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 89–136; *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams et al. (6th edn, 2 vols, New York, 1993), 1, pp. 1744–8, and (7th edn, 2 vols, New York, 2000), 1, pp. 1747–51; A. Hopton, *Abiezer Coppe: Selected Writings* (London, 1987).

³ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 90. It is, however, quite possible that Coppe and Ginsburg independently focused on the biblical uses of 'howl' in the prophetic works of Isaiah (13:6, 14:31, 52:5, 65:14), Jeremiah (4:8, 47:2, 48:31), Ezekiel (21:12), Micah (1:3), Zephaniah (1:11), Zechariah (11:2) and in the New Testament Epistle of James (5:1).

⁴ B. MacSweeney, *Ranter* (Nottingham, 1985). 'Ranter' is MacSweeney's persona in this slim volume of verse about his hero's search for love and meaning in a dark world peopled with 'Lollards, Levellers / Upside Down folk, Miltonic upstarts / heroes & heroines / reading Shelley / taking up Anarchy like a pen' (p. 9). When *Ranter* cries 'This is my power: To peck and roar' (p. 11) or when his bride 'disappeared / over every horizon / praising civil disorder / singing for the sleepless' (p. 21), Coppe's presence is quite strong. Likewise, when *Ranter* rants 'Where is my bride / holy of holies ... *Ranter the wanderer / Ranter's bride / walking the Weald: / Pilgrim's Way*' (p. 9), he recalls Coppe's use of the Canticles (2:10ff.): 'WELL, once more; Where be you, ho? Are you *within*? Where be you? What! sitting upon a *Forme*, without doors, (in the Gentiles *Court*,) as if you had neither life nor soul in you? Rise up, rise up, my Love, my fair one, and *come away*; for lo, the Winter is past' (Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 53). Cf. N. Flinker, *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature: Kisses of Their Mouths* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 134.

⁵ J.G. Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford, 1987), p. 89.

decentered, subject, Coppe provides a model for his readers to do likewise'.⁶ Kathryn Gucer extends consideration of the discourse to the ways in which the enemies of the Ranters made use of the motif of madness. Their apparent mania 'was a deliberately crafted rhetorical weapon. In their fierce hostility toward Ranter madness, pamphleteers positioned themselves against a sectarian critique of social authority at a moment when that authority was particularly vulnerable to attack'.⁷ Clement Hawes objects to a psychoanalytic approach to the so-called madness. He relates to Coppe as practitioner of what he calls a "'manic" rhetoric'. Hawes explains that these 'manic' texts:

all share the key element of enthusiasm: a claim, that is, to supernatural authority ... Given that Biblical authority was the outermost horizon of seventeenth-century British thought – a shared master code, as it were, even among the warring factions – it is deeply unhistorical to read pathology back into such enthusiastic rhetorical strategies'.⁸

Nicholas McDowell treats Coppe's rhetoric by focusing on the parody that he has detected beneath the surface of the discourse. He shows how much of what Coppe wrote anticipated the response of his academic 'cronies' trained in the Latin Grammar of William Lily which 'can be described as the foundation text of the intellectual culture of early modern England'.⁹ McDowell's account of the many ways in which Coppe parodied his critics as well as Lily is fascinating and brilliant, though it is unfortunate that his discussion of Coppe's use of Hebrew contains typographic errors.¹⁰

My presentation of Coppe's midrashic technique is another approach to the rhetorical concerns that are at the heart of Hawes's project. Coppe's discourse is generically different than the Cartesian 'cogito' that Tom Hayes treats. Neither need the style be taken to intimate something about the psychic state of the writer. Coppe is deliberately making use of what Jacques Derrida might have seen as a non-logocentric manner for writing about his world. The biblical 'master code' that Hawes imagines was, for Coppe, a way of presenting a world-view that he was not ready or willing to expose fully. For both spiritual and practical reasons

⁶ T. Hayes, 'Diggers, Ranters, and Women Prophets: The Discourse of Madness and the Cartesian Cogito in Seventeenth-Century England', *CLIO: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History*, 26 (1996): pp. 38–9.

⁷ K. Gucer, "'Not Heretofore Extant in Print": Where the Mad Ranters Are', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 61 (2000): p. 78.

⁸ Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, pp. 1–2.

⁹ McDowell, *English Radical Imagination*, p. 100.

¹⁰ McDowell, *English Radical Imagination*, p. 112, has מ'ספריים instead of מ'ספרים. On p. 120, he has ahaheli אההאלי instead of ata eli אתה אלי, and avitzezer אביצזור instead of avi'ezer אביעזר.

he had to embrace ambiguity and what better way for doing so than to speak in riddles or parables?

Coppe made use of Judaic materials in order to fashion and present his Ranter ideology that was a far cry from anything Jewish. He had his name printed in Hebrew letters on the cover page of *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spirituall Wine* (1649) and presented himself as ‘*A late converted JEW*’.¹¹ He likewise made reference to the way in which Hebrew letters are read on a written page: ‘that can spell every word backwards, and then tell what it is: that can reade him from the left hand to the right, as if they were reading *English*, or from the right to the left, as if they were reading *Hebrew*’.¹² All this was, however, part of a strategy that encouraged English Protestants to go beyond the rigid assumptions of their creed and make the kinds of changes that ancient Christianity demanded of Judaism. So when he spoke of being ‘a late converted Jew’ Coppe meant that he had recently abandoned what Nigel Smith terms his early ‘Presbyterian leanings’ and later Baptist teachings, ‘on the road to his eventual Antinomian stance’.¹³ So ‘Jew’ for Coppe was a way to describe the Christianity that preceded the new Ranter truth.

Coppe’s familiarity with basic principles of Hebrew orthography was probably the result of his studies at Oxford where he began work on a BA but seems to have left without a degree.¹⁴ There he might have read the work of Thomas Godwin, a somewhat popular seventeenth-century Christian Hebraist, whose account of midrash in 1625 could be taken as a general description of Coppe’s approach to discourse a few decades later. Godwin had pointed out that ‘The *Disputer* ... insisted vpon *allegories*, and searched out mysticall interpretations of the *Text*. Hence himselfe was termed *Darschan*, and his exposition, or homily, *Midrasch*. And their schoole, *Beth Hammidrasch*. They were counted the profoundest interpreters’.¹⁵ A consideration of Coppe’s work as ‘a late converted’ midrash is thus in accord with the Jewish metaphor that he himself used to describe himself and his text.

It is Coppe’s weaving together of various biblical texts that connects him to the methodologies of midrash. Daniel Boyarin has shown how this classical rabbinical genre is a kind of intertextual interpretation of biblical passages that produces a new version of the text that purports to render an account of the tradition not

¹¹ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Although most scholars agree about this, there has been some recent speculation on the extent and nature of Coppe’s work at Oxford. Nigel Smith is content to indicate his having left (*Ranter Writings*, p. 11). Robert Kenny refers to ‘the attention he gave to learning’ (R. Kenny, “‘In These Last Dayes’: The Strange Work of Abiezer Coppe”, *Seventeenth Century*, 13 (1998): p. 159). For more biographical detail about Coppe, cf. A. Hessayon, ‘The Making of Abiezer Coppe’, *JEH*, 62, no. 1 (2011): pp. 38–58.

¹⁵ Thomas Godwin, *Moses and Aaron. Civil and Ecclesiastical Rites, Vused by the ancient Hebrewes* (London, 1625), p. 34.

previously articulated: 'This perspective comprehends how later texts interpret and rewrite the earlier ones to change the meaning of the entire canon ... We have here, then an almost classic intertextuality.'¹⁶ Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick's pioneering work on midrash and literature has paved the way to understanding early modern Christian appropriations of biblical texts as midrashic. Their introduction refers to a 'weaving together of proof-text and commentary [which] quickens our understanding of textual production and suggests a symbiosis of interpretive and creative writing'.¹⁷

Here there is a compelling parallel in Coppe's work. He spells out his name in Hebrew, translates Abiezer into Latin (*auxilium patris* or help of the father) and then appropriates for his own purposes the intertextuality of biblical quotation in the classical rabbis. He shapes his biblical style in order to add strength and power to his views. He thus makes the genre of midrash his own and intuitively focuses on the poetic texture of social justice that is at the heart of so much of the literary prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. He presents his message by means of some densely woven biblical passages that take on coherence in the poetic of his own text. Coppe does this in such a way as to integrate the language of biblical praise of God into the prophetic mode of condemnation of social injustice.

Coppe's personal shifts in belief and practice from Presbyterian beginnings and Baptist preaching to Ranter ideologue and spokesman, to prison, to an ironic recanting of his previous beliefs, all make use of biblical references and imagery to articulate and develop his views. His *Some Sweet Sips* makes constant reference to a variety of traditional sources from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. This is likewise true of both parts of his *Fiery Flying Roll* (1649). In 1651, when he published his *Remonstrance of the Sincere and Zealous Protestation and Copp's Return to the Ways of Truth* from prison, he continued to cite scripture on nearly every page. My basic contention here is that Coppe moves back and forth between a series of biblical contexts in order to come up with his own version of spiritual truth. His use of biblical references marks him as midrashic, albeit in his own 'lately converted' manner. His text is largely comprised of long strings of quotations that may appear to be mere tokens of orthodox faith and authority but these are anything but traditional! Coppe appropriates biblical texts in order to imply that his messages of spiritual awakening, of sexual desire and of social criticism are the real truths of the Bible.

The lyrical quality of Coppe's prose is based to a large extent on references to biblical texts that function as lyric in the Hebrew Bible. Coppe characterises his *Some Sweet Sips* as 'One of the *Songs of Sion*', and then shifts back and forth between biblical metaphors and typological understandings of these texts.¹⁸

¹⁶ D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 16.

¹⁷ G. Hartman and S. Budick, 'Introduction', in G. Hartman and S. Budick (eds), *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven and London, 1986), p. xii.

¹⁸ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 42.

His types celebrate striking images such as ‘Late converted JEW’, ‘the Lords Lilly’ or ‘Land flowing with such wine, milke, and honey’, while their implicit significance calls for a movement to ‘Arise out of *Flesh*, into *Spirit*; out of *Form*, into *Power*; Out of *Type*, into *Truth*; out of the *Shadow*, into the *Substance*; out of the *Signe*, into the thing *Signified*, &c.’¹⁹ All of this implicitly argues that he would apply readings of the Christian significance of the Hebrew Bible to the new Ranter doctrine which is to replace traditional theology the way early Christianity understood itself to have replaced or ‘fulfilled’ ancient Judaism.

As *Some Sweet Sips* continues, the excitement of the narrator’s voice increases and the promise of mysterious enlightenment becomes more and more alluring. Epistle II promises ‘the dawning of the day’ to those who will awaken from their spiritual lethargy.²⁰ The language Coppe employs echoes the Song of Songs at the beginning of Chapter 1 and concludes with a paraphrase of Psalm 24. A careful reading of this tissue of intertextual echoes should not miss the subtlety of the connections. Coppe’s biblical culture takes the motif of consciousness and awakening and charges it with sexual energy through echoes of Canticles.

‘The day *star* is up’ says Coppe: that is, the new day is here and the sun (with a pun on Son) is shining. He goes on: ‘rise up my *love*, my *dove*, my faire one, and *come away*. The day *star* woeth you, it is the voice of my beloved that saith open to me – I am *risen indeed*, rise up my *love*, open to me my faire one.’²¹ The biblical texture here is rich and complex. The first part of this passage is a quotation from Canticles 2:10: ‘My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away’. In Canticles the lover goes on to describe the coming of spring as he urges her to join him in partaking of the sensuous pleasures of nature for their lovemaking. The flowers appeal to visual and olfactory senses, the voice of the turtledove incorporates sound while the green figs and tender grapes combine to appeal to sight, taste and smell:

For lo, the Winter is past, the raine is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land, And [let him that hath an eare to heare, heare what the Spirit saith] the figtree putteth forth her green figges, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell: *Arise* my love, my fair one and *come away*.²²

Coppe encompasses all this in his quotation but then connects this passage to another from Luke’s Gospel where the disciples realise that they have just seen the risen Jesus and exclaim ‘The Lord is risen indeed’ (Luke 24:34). Thus, while Coppe’s text is charged with sensuousness and implicit sexuality from Canticles, it

¹⁹ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, pp. 47–8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 53–4.

likewise associates these experiences with Christian resurrection.²³ For Coppe, the human being is the risen Christ and sexual experience is part of the consciousness of this new understanding of traditional Christianity.

Coppe then returns to awakening and the light of day which struggles against the darkness of night and death. He quotes Isaiah and now provides an account of his biblical text. Even here, however, his reference ('*Isai. 60. 1,2,3,17, &c.*') is slightly incomplete since the conclusion of his paragraph is a literal quotation from the continuation of the passages in Isaiah.²⁴ Coppe the preacher is not content with this, however. He goes on to tie his previous themes to his original interest in consciousness raising or awakening. He quotes a well-known passage from Psalm 24 in which the gates (of Heaven?) lift up their heads to greet the coming of God. For Coppe, however, the entry of 'the *King of glory*' carries with it necessary violence and destruction.²⁵ What happens, he asks implicitly, when doors lift up their heads?

O! Open ye doors, Hearts open; let the *King of glory* come in. Open dear hearts. Dear hearts, I should be loath to be arraigned for Burglary – The *King* himself (whose houses you all are) who can, and will, and well may break open his own houses; throw the doors off the hinges with his powerfull voyce, which rendeth the heavens, shatter these doors to shivers, and break in upon his people.²⁶

The lifting up of the heads of the doors becomes a reflection of the ravages of the 1640s. The imagery of the Psalm takes on new meaning as Coppe demands that his listeners understand the imagery of the everlasting doors in terms of ordinary hinges that cannot accommodate the lifting of the heads of the doors. The chapter thus concludes with the ambiguity of an exultant celebration of light that is followed by the disruptive aspect of consciousness-raising and the shattering of the comfortable world. It can be understood as an unavoidable aspect and concomitant of the recent Civil Wars.

In later sections of *Some Sweet Sips*, Coppe refers to a letter describing a dream 'from Mrs. T.P. (another late Converted Jew)', and then proceeds to make his own comments.²⁷ These passages are of interest in terms of the biblical style of its presentation of matters of gender in addition to their significance in recent scholarship by Ariel Hessayon. The texture of Epistle IV is significantly different than that of Coppe's explanatory comments in Epistle V. Mrs. T.P. makes reference to various biblical phrases and images, yet these are less abundant than the midrash-like texts that Coppe uses to shape his response. Epistle V juxtaposes a great many

²³ For more on Canticles in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, see Flinker, *Song of Songs*.

²⁴ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 52; Isaiah 60:18–20.

²⁵ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 52; Psalm 24:7–10.

²⁶ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64

biblical passages as it incorporates one of Coppe's lyrical prose pieces, 'Songs of Sion, the Lords song'.²⁸ There are texts here from Judges (5:12), Canticles (2:8, 5:1–2), Psalms (137:3–4), Mark (1:6) and Luke (15) among others. These combine to support Coppe's views of gendered equality but they likewise constitute a love song. Coppe is careful here but the biblical texts help articulate his rhetoric of terse, sexual excitement. He tells Mrs. T.P. 'I know you are a *Vessel* of the *Lords House*, filled with heavenly liquor, and I see your love'. 'And it is the voice of my *Beloved*, that saith, drinke oh friends! yea, drinke abundantly oh *Beloved!*'²⁹ Those last lines are from the opening of Canticles 5 in which the lovers speak of their desire but cannot manage to meet. Just after he has spoken the verses asking the friends to drink abundantly, the beloved in Canticles tells of how 'the voice of my beloved ... knocketh, saying Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled'. She hesitates for a moment but then opens her door, only to find that he is gone. She goes looking for him and is beaten by the watchmen.³⁰ Needless to say, Canticles is a troublesome text. Its nearly explicit sexuality is juxtaposed against the agony of separation and frustration that the lovers experience. Traditionally speaking, Jews and Christians alike have read this biblical book as allegory rather than relate to its literal level of carnal significance. Coppe's language entertains both of these levels of meaning.

It is at this point that Hessayon's discovery is most suggestive. He has identified Mrs. T.P.: 'On 12 November 1648 Coppe received a fraternal letter from Mistress T.P., probably Thomasine Pendarves (*bap.* 1618, *d.* in or after 1671), daughter of Thomas Newcomen of Dartmouth and wife of John Pendarves, minister of St Helen's, Abingdon'.³¹ Manfred Brod has recently treated Coppe's presentation of Mrs. T.P. as 'an eloquent love-letter to Thomasine'.³² Coppe's text abounds in sexual tension that remains unresolved as he makes his case for gender equality. He refers to Luke's Prodigal Son narrative (15:1–32) with women at home with their Father (like the elder brother of the parable) while the men are abroad like the younger son. The Epistle as a whole calls up images of biblical poetry from Judges and Psalms to articulate the spirituality of the inner court of the ancient Temple at Jerusalem. All this helps to establish what Brod describes as 'a powerful narrative of cosmic redemption and recovery from the Fall',³³ even as it establishes the mode of midrashic reshaping of biblical texts.

Beyond his message of prophetic anger at the evils of social injustice, Coppe was suggesting and implying more than he could say directly. His midrash is a poetic statement that relies on hint and innuendo. The process of interpretation is

²⁸ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 67.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁰ Song of Solomon 5:2–7.

³¹ A. Hessayon, 'Abiezer Coppe', *ODNB*.

³² M. Brod, 'Doctrinal Deviance in Abingdon: Thomasine Pendarves and her Circle', *Baptist Quarterly*, 41 (2005): p. 97.

³³ *Ibid.*

somehow at the centre of his text. The reader is challenged to struggle to understand while the speaker always stops short of revealing his message. The opening of *Some Sweet Sips* is typical: 'HEer's something (according to the wisdom given to us) written unto you, in all these ensuing Epistles. In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are *Unlearned*, and unstable, wrest: as they doe also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.'³⁴ The difficulty the reader is faced with is basically one of interpretation, a process that carries with it a dire threat: destruction. As the Epistle goes on, it continues to offer hints at its meaning without ever revealing this. As such, the rhetoric demands that readers provide their own answers. Coppe's language promises absolute revelation but never provides it.

The methodology of the late converted midrash is set out at the beginning: 'Here is Scripture language throughout these lines: yet Book, Chapter, and Verse seldome quoted'.³⁵ The biblical sources are not quoted because each reader is expected to provide them. On another level, however, 'Book, Chapter, and Verse' would merely point in the right direction without revealing anything. The lines that follow provide an example. Coppe quotes from the Gospels which, in turn, refer back to Isaiah. The Hebrew prophet had been presenting a message of comfort and promise after earlier punishment (Isaiah 40:1). In the Gospels, however, these words become part of the description of John the Baptist and his demand for baptism and repentance. Implicit in the placement of Isaiah's words in the mouth of John is a shift in meaning from the promise of redemption after exile and destruction to a new kind of promise based on repentance. In Coppe's text these lines from the Gospels introduce the coming of the Bridegroom from Canticles (5:2), 'the voice of my *Beloved*, that knocketh, saying, Open to me, and let me come *In*'. This then leads directly into a key passage for Coppe:

Here is the voyce of one crying: Arise out of *Flesh*, into *Spirit*; out of *Form*, into *Power*; Out of *Type*, into *Truth*; out of the *Shadow*, into the *Substance*; out of the *Signe*, into the thing *Signified*, &c.³⁶

While Isaiah was speaking of comfort and the Gospels were hinting at the secret mission of Jesus, Coppe's midrash is about the struggle for the absolute. Flesh, form, type, shadow and signs are all part of the lack of clarity in the human world, but spirit, power, truth, substance and the thing signified are part of the world of absolutes that lives within the ephemeral. Coppe, however, cannot and will not express himself so clearly. The best he can do is to allow his use of quotation and language to intimate that which cannot be expressed: 'the thing *Signified*'.³⁷

³⁴ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 47.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 47–8.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

A significant element in Coppe's midrashic rhetoric concerns his development of the motif of the hermeneutic journey. He begins this in *Some Sweet Sips* as part of his general dichotomy between letter and spirit: 'If thou shouldst arise into the Letter of these Letters, before the Spirit of life enter into thee, Thou wouldst runne before the Lord, and out-runne thy selfe, and runne upon a rock'.³⁸ The running here is part of the underlying conflicted metaphor that moves in different directions at the same time and thus demands that the reader interpret its significance. Running before the Lord is probably a positive act yet it immediately shifts to 'out-runne thy selfe' and thence to 'runne upon a rock'. That is, what begins as apparently pious turns out to be 'a stumbling-stone to some'.³⁹ The reader is thus forced to reinterpret the meaning of the verb. The confusion about how to interpret 'run' is part of the motif of inside and outside, within and without. The solution here is to be 'Inside' where 'there is no occasion of stumbling'. He soon returns to what he calls 'one string of this instrument': 'Some are at *Home*, and within; Some *Abroad*, and without. They that are at *Home*, are such as know their union in God, and live upon, and *in*, and not upon any thing below, or beside him'.⁴⁰ The distinction or tension between 'Home' and 'Abroad' is part of a larger metaphor that gets more development later in the pamphlet. The conceptual movement from Abroad to Home is, in abbreviated form, the Homeric theme of *nostos* or return. Despite his early study of Greek,⁴¹ Coppe makes no explicit reference to Homer here but there is constant attention to the speaker's attempt at communicating his meaning without literally doing so. The reader must struggle to interpret and on that level must travel the infinite mental distance from sign to signified. This is the beginning of the motif of the hermeneutic journey for Coppe.

This path takes on a series of biblical contexts as *Some Sweet Sips* continues. Coppe returns to Canticles and invites his reader to go on a journey: 'Come with me from *Lebanon*, with me from *Lebanon*, from the top of *Amana*, look from the top of *Shenir*, and *Hermon*, from the Lyons dens, from the mountains of the Leopards. Come with me, *Rise*, let us be going'.⁴² The biblical text (Canticles 2:8) requires interpretation and this is surely part of the message. The invitation to travel is clearly more than a reference to a literal Middle Eastern journey whatever the biblical passage originally meant.⁴³ For Coppe, then, the journey is first and foremost one of a search for meaning in both the letter and spirit of the text.

³⁸ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 48.

³⁹ Isaiah's metaphor for something difficult to accept or a trap in 8:14. Paul cited this in Romans 9:33.

⁴⁰ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, pp. 48–9.

⁴¹ Hessayon points out that 'in his diary entry for 18 October 1634 he [Thomas Dugard] noted laconically that Coppe and two other boys had received tuition from a Greek New Testament and Homer' ('The Making of Abiezer Coppe', p. 44).

⁴² Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 54.

⁴³ For more on Coppe's use of this passage from Canticles, see Flinker, *Song of Songs*, pp. 133–5.

The language of the pamphlet takes on additional significance in terms of the journey motif. The title refers to 'Grapes, brought ... from *Spiritual Canaan*' and goes on at some length about the need to 'hasten to Spirituall *Canaan (the Living Lord)*, which is a land of large *Liberty*'.⁴⁴ The journey here is, of course, that of the biblical exodus from Egypt which Coppe takes as a central metaphor for spiritual awakening. The biblical texts provide the earthly details of the journey while the contexts and implications Coppe uses to present his text require the reader to contemplate the literal journey at the same time as attempting to understand its significance.

At the conclusion of the second Epistle in *Some Sweet Sips*, Coppe implicitly refers back to his title and to the journey motif. His speaker expresses the hope that men 'may seeke *Truth*. (The *truth* as it is in *Jesus*)', and then goes on to indicate that the very process of seeking must be qualified: 'That they may seek *Truth*, and not *Type*, which was here *below*, while he was here in the *Vaile*, which is his body. That they may awake, stand upon their legs and walke, and no longer seeke (The *living* among the *dead*).' The process of seeking must avoid the 'type' – which takes us back to the act of interpretation. Like the disciples who went to the grave of Jesus only to be asked 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' (Luke 24:5), Coppe would have his readers go beyond the type and seek the risen Christ, that is liberty or 'the *Land* that is very far off – to some as yet, yet neere to others'.⁴⁵ The seeking of the truth is thus likened to the journey to 'the *Land* that is very far off' or *Spiritual Canaan*. The road to be followed leads from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Although Coppe continues to make use of the Exodus from Egypt as a central metaphor, there are other biblical texts that articulate a similar message. Most striking in this context is the citation from Psalm 23 in Epistle II of *Some Sweet Sips*. As the speaker distinguishes between flesh and spirit he suddenly introduces the language of the psalm which implicitly insists upon the metaphoric significance of its own worldly references:

And though I have knowne *Men* after the *Flesh*, *Pastors*, *Shepherds* after the *Flesh*. Yet *Now*, *Henceforth* know I them so no more. I now know, that *The Lord* is my *Pastor*, I shall not want; *He* maketh me to lie downe in *Green Pastures*.⁴⁶

The imagery of the psalm requires that the reader or listener recognise that the message is not about literal shepherds or green pastures. As he continues, Coppe's speaker is apparently just quoting the psalm: 'He *Leadeth* me beside the *Still Waters*, *He Restoreth* my soule, he leadeth me in the pathes of *Righteousnesse*, for his names sake: yea, though I walke through the valley of the *Shadow of Death*, I will feare no evill: for *Thou* art *with Me*, &c.' Then follows a short explanation:

⁴⁴ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 42.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

‘This hath been fulfilled in a more literall, externall way, formerly; Is *Now* fulfilling in a spirituall, glorious, and *Inward* way’. That is, the language requires the reader to recognise the breakdown between the two worlds. Coppe sets the journey ‘Beside the *Still Waters*’, on ‘the pathes of Righteousnesse’ and ‘through the valley of the *Shadow of Death*’ in the wilderness, even though the psalm makes no such association: ‘And that in the *Wildernesse* too. *He* hath prepared a *Table* in the wilderness’. This eventually leads back to the Exodus when God ‘lighted his people by a pillar of fire’. The journey motif leads directly to ‘this glorie and guidance, this light and lustre’ through poetic association and midrashic juxtaposition of disconnected biblical texts.⁴⁷

This blending of a series of biblical metaphors is likewise part of the texture of *The Fiery Flying Roll*. In both parts of this pamphlet, Coppe picks up the theme of prophetic destruction and articulates his views by means of biblical images that he reshapes into a coherent whole. The ferocity of his language of destruction is, of course, dependent upon the biblical prophet’s condemnation of his society for its failures to pay proper attention to the suffering of the poor. Coppe cites a variety of such passages but, as he promises in *Some Sweet Sips*,⁴⁸ he is not always explicit about his sources.

The central hermeneutic journey metaphor in this pamphlet is one of flight to Heaven. On the level of imagery (what Coppe refers to as ‘history’) there are references to travel through a gate, going up to London, going into holes and caves, flight in ‘fiery Chariots’, departing, following and creeping, but these are all connected to the central cultural vision of seeking salvation. For Coppe this search involves a struggle to present the difficulty of articulating just what this means. Thus, whatever the specific kind of travel, Coppe’s point is always somehow beyond the metaphor.

The first *Fiery Flying Roll* opens with a preface in which Coppe tells the reader that he ‘will only point at the gate; thorow which I was led into that new City, new *Hierusalem*’. This action, however, is soon translated into images of illness, fire and destruction in which he tells of being ‘utterly plagued, consumed, damned, rammed, and sunke into nothing’ only then to be promised:

Fear not, I will take thee up into mine everlasting Kingdom. But thou shalt (first) drink a bitter cup, a bitter cup, a bitter cup; whereupon ... I was throwne into the belly of hell (and take what you can of it in these expressions, though the matter is beyond expression).⁴⁹

The motif of entry into the New Jerusalem becomes a variety of other experiences which culminate with the command ‘Go up to *London*, to *London*, that great City,

⁴⁷ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2.

write, write, write'.⁵⁰ The journey through the gates of Jerusalem shifts into one to London which, in turn, becomes a writing assignment. The travel is translated into writing which must then be interpreted by the reader.

As the pamphlet continues, there is an implicit intertextual movement back and forth between London and Jerusalem as talk of 'the streets of the great City' leads to political references to the Levellers and the 'late slaine or dead Charles', to long quotations from a prophecy of Isaiah. The mind-boggling shifts in time and space are part of the hermeneutic challenge to understanding that is at the centre of the pamphlet. Coppe is condemning the excesses of his own time but doing so in the language of biblical prophets such as Isaiah or Ezekiel. As readers we are encouraged to follow him as he moves into the heavenly Jerusalem and then goes to London to write, but these and the many other images are meant to be read as mystery rather than explicit history.

Coppe's hermeneutic journey thus involves both literal references to places and travel, and mystical or spiritual approaches to these passages. On one level, the point of the juxtaposition of biblical and seventeenth-century time is the intimation that England in 1649 is not unlike biblical Israel as it faced destruction and exile. Coppe's text points to the similarities but leaves the explicit interpretation to the reader as part of the reading experience. For example, near the end of the first part of his *Fiery Flying Roll*, Coppe refers to Isaiah 10 in the context of a collection of biblical passages about the destruction of trees. The headnote indicates that the chapter is about '*How the Judge of Heaven and Earth, who judgeth righteous judgement, passeth sentence against all those Great Ones, who (like Oakes and tall Cedars) will not bow*'.⁵¹ The chapter itself consists of a series of paraphrases and full quotations from Daniel (5) and Isaiah (10). The passages from Isaiah all deal with the destruction of trees and do so with a series of powerful images:

he shall kindle a burning, like the burning of a fire ... and it shall burne and devour his thornes, and his briars in one day. And shall consume the glory of his Forrest ... shall lop the bough with terror ... And he shall cut down the thickets of the Forrest with iron.⁵²

These are all direct quotations from the King James Version of Isaiah 10:16–18, 33. The original contexts can be understood in terms of social justice (that is, the prophet's anger at its absence), but in Coppe's text there is likewise more than a hint of the hermeneutic journey. The speaker connects his biblical references in such a way as to suggest a hidden meaning that says more than the individual words seem to articulate.

Coppe concludes that all this is the result of the way in which the 'Great Ones' have oppressed the needy: 'For the cries of the poore, for the oppression of the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 94.

⁵² Ibid., p. 95.

needy. For the horrid insolency of proud man.⁵³ He does not, however, mention that Isaiah's chapter – like so many other passages in the Hebrew Bible – begins with an explicit condemnation of social injustice: 'Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!' (Isaiah 10:1–2). That is, the entire passage about the destruction of the forests is introduced by Isaiah in a manner quite similar to Coppe's conclusion. Coppe's tirade is a paraphrase of the prophetic context in Isaiah. He writes as if he were re-enacting the social critique of the biblical prophets and his voice here is deliberately fashioned as an echo of the biblical context.

Coppe's *Second Fiery Flying Roule* works out a further blending of the visions and metaphors it uses and examines. The title-page speaks of 'the Day of the Lords Recovery and Discovery', and adds to this 'narration of various, strange, yet true stories' as well as an account of 'how (most miraculously) they (even base things) have been, are, and shall be made fiery Chariots, to mount up some into divine glory, and unspotted beauty and majesty'.⁵⁴ These elements come together on the level of the biblical passages that take on new meaning in the context of their appearance in Coppe's text just as they complete the motif of the hermeneutic journey. When, for example, he refers to the words of Jesus about giving to the poor, he shifts the point from literal following (to become a disciple) to following (or paying attention to) a narration:

Come! give all to the poore and follow me, and you shall have treasure in heaven.
Follow me, who was numbred among transgressors, and whose visage was more
marr'd then any mans, follow me ... Follow me, who, last Lords day Septem. 30.
1649. met him in open field.⁵⁵

Following Coppe's narration is thus compared to the injunction of the Gospels to give all to the poor.⁵⁶ Coppe's narration of his own act of charity leads into an account of the connection between 'base things' and the 'fiery Chariot to mount the Author up into divine glory'.⁵⁷ This motif of the chariot is a traditional metaphor for the soul's ascent into heaven. Coppe then explains that his sexual behaviour is part of a mystery or riddle that is simultaneously about spiritual travel and interpretation: 'And then again, by wanton kisses, kissing hath been confounded; and externall kisses, have been made the fiery chariots, to mount me swiftly into the bosom of him whom my soul loves'.⁵⁸

⁵³ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 95.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁶ Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21; John 8:31.

⁵⁷ Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, p. 105.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.



Chapter 6

Empire-Building: The English Republic, Scotland and Ireland

Jim Smyth

The Cromwellian subjugations of Ireland and Scotland may be construed, as they so often are, as chapters in the political and military history of the English republic. Thus understood there seems little or no need to erect conceptual scaffolding for a narrative driven by political vicissitude, military necessity and brute facts on the ground. Parliament merely confronted, and defeated, its Royalist enemies at Drogheda, Wexford, Dunbar and Worcester. In more recent years, however, prompted by the 'new' British history, historians have been as likely to view England's relations with Ireland and Scotland during the Cromwellian era as an – albeit dramatic – episode in the long, fluctuating, processes of British State formation. 'Union' is as significant from that perspective as conquest. But there is at least one other way of looking at the interactions of the 'three nations' in this period: Cromwellian expansion as republican imperialism.¹ Of course, these are complementary not alternative approaches.

The conventional stress on immediate political and military contingencies as the thrust behind English expansion in 1649–53 is also, of course, accurate, and one will search the Commonwealth prints, or the records of the Council of State, in vain for *explicit* evidence that 'imperialist' ideology, motivation or strategising shaped decision-making on Ireland or Scotland. Providentialist and Protestant apocalyptic rhetoric is much more comprehensible. An imperial stress, however, reveals much about the Englishness of English republicanism, and the 'imperial' logic of early modern republicans. National defence – as its officers of state saw it – impelled the Commonwealth regime to crush Irish resistance and to launch a pre-emptive invasion of Scotland. Yet what has been called in another context 'the moral energy of imperialism' (or to be more prosaic, the varying senses of English superiority) helps, at least partially, to account for English success on the battlefield. Retrospectively, republicans attributed the unbroken sequence of

¹ In terms of jurisdiction, law and administration, sixteenth-century Wales was integrated into the English polity in ways in which Scotland and Ireland never were; B. Bradshaw, 'The Tudor Reformation and revolution in Wales and Ireland: the origins of the British problem', in B. Bradshaw and J. Morrill (eds), *The British Problem, c.1534–1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 39–65.

English victories in these years, including over the Dutch, and in Scotland, ‘which never any king could conquer’, to the martial vitality of a free state.²

Niall Ferguson’s plucky attempt to rehabilitate the British Empire notwithstanding,³ most historians would probably still agree with Anthony Pagden’s 2003 verdict that ‘today the word [‘empire’] is generally used as a term of abuse’.⁴ And that ‘abhorrence’ of imperialism, as an earlier historian terms it, has profoundly jaundiced twentieth-century accounts of seventeenth-century English expansion, especially where Ireland is concerned.⁵ ‘The tide of English radicalism’ writes Norah Carlin, broke ‘on the rocks of Ireland’.⁶ But, as the chief celebrant of that radicalism, Christopher Hill, reminded us, most radicals – Quakers, Fifth Monarchists, even some Levellers – did not see it that way. Rather ‘they were trapped in the assumptions of their age’,⁷ and as such for the most part they adhered to conquest theory and supported the Cromwellian settlement as both just and necessary. Again there were a number of reasons for that support – the perceived immediate threat which Ireland posed to the security of the Commonwealth, anti-popery, revenge for the 1641 massacres and the need, under the terms of the Adventurers Act (1642), to pay off Parliament’s war debts with confiscated Irish land. One group, however, did come to articulate an imperial vision: the Commonwealthmen, or ‘classical republicans’ or ‘neo-Romans’, for whom the conquests of Ireland and Scotland, as well as victory over the Dutch, were explained and applauded by an integrated theory of war, republicanism and empire-building.

‘English republicans or Commonwealthmen’, remarked Caroline Robbins, ‘were more renowned than numerous.’ She further noted that ‘there cannot be discovered a typical republican imperial ideology’.⁸ And, while it is true that republican writers and politicians had their differences, the extent – with the exception of the regicide, Henry Marten – to which they shared some sort of

² The boast about Scotland is John Milton’s *The Readie & Easie Way to establish a free commonwealth* in R.W. Ayers (ed.), *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton. Volume 7. 1659–1660* (New Haven and London, 1980), p. 424.

³ Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London, 2003).

⁴ A. Pagden, *Peoples and Empires* (London, 2003), p. xxi.

⁵ R. Koebner, *Empire* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 1.

⁶ N. Carlin, ‘Extreme or Mainstream?: The English Independents and the Cromwellian reconquest of Ireland, 1649–1651’, in B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield and W. Maley (eds), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534–1660* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 221.

⁷ C. Hill, ‘Seventeenth-century English radicals and Ireland’, in C. Hill, *A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical Politics, Religion and Literature in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1990), p. 141.

⁸ C. Robbins (ed.), *Two English Republican Tracts. Plato redivivus, or, A dialogue concerning government* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 40, 43.

‘republican imperial ideology’, is perhaps more striking than the lack of typicality.⁹ Modern republicanism, with its rhetorical commitment to popular sovereignty, and implication (long ignored by the French republic’s imperial practice) of national self-determination, seems logically inconsistent with empire. For all their insistence upon the excellence of free states, early-modern republicans recognised no necessary contradiction in such states subjugating others. The sheer rootedness of imperial assumptions in republican thinking is illustrated by the ‘poet against empire’,¹⁰ John Milton’s *History of Britain* (1670), which identifies more readily with the Roman colonisers than with the native Britons, declaring approvingly that the conquerors ‘beate us into some civilitie’.¹¹ And if the description of Walter Moyle as ‘the last really authentic specimen of the tribe’ of classical republicans fits, then it is notable that the last book by the tribe, Moyle’s *Essay on the constitution and government of the Roman state*, praises in particular the military virility and restless expansion of the republic.¹²

English republicans read their Livy, Sallust and other ancient authors. They also read Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy*, and it is there, in the second discourse, that their understanding of the dynamic relationship between republic and empire is most cogently, matter-of-factly, and accessibly stated. Machiavelli distinguished between republics for preservation (or stability) such as Venice, and republics for increase, such as Rome, and clearly recommended the latter. ‘It is impossible’, he argued, ‘for a republic to succeed in standing still while enjoying its liberty within its narrow borders, because if the republic does not trouble others, others will trouble it.’¹³ Territorial expansion thus ensured liberty at home and security against external aggression. Machiavelli, moreover, attributed military success to political structure. Rome expanded not because of its wealth – the supposed sinews of war – or, as Livy believed, because she was favoured by fortune, but because of the skill, discipline and martial vigour of its citizen armies and the prudence

⁹ See Marten’s comments on Ireland (unpublished at the time) in Sarah Barber, *A Revolutionary Rogue: Henry Marten and the English Republic* (Stroud, 2000), p. 41.

¹⁰ This phrase refers to David Armitage’s thoughtful essay, ‘John Milton; poet against empire’, in D. Armitage, A. Himy and Q. Skinner (eds), *Milton and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 206–25.

¹¹ L. Gregerson, ‘Colonials write the margins, Spenser, Milton and England on the margins’, in B. Rajan and E. Sauer (eds), *Milton and the Imperial Vision* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1999), p. 182. Sellar and Yeatman later endorsed Milton’s view in *1066 and All That*, concluding that ‘The Roman Conquest was, however, a *Good Thing*, since Britons were only natives at the time’.

¹² Z.S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans, an Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth-century England* (1945; 2nd edn, Evanston, IL, 1962), p. 174. The 1796 edition of Moyle’s *Essay*, which was first published posthumously in 1723, is reprinted in Robbins (ed.), *Two English Republican Tracts*.

¹³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. J. Conaway Bondanella and P. Bondanella (Oxford, 1997), p. 206.

of its administration. Ultimately, however, empire endangered the republic. The luxuries and 'bad habits' encountered in outlying provinces were inimical to military discipline and public *virtù*. The prolongation of military commands in far-flung colonies nurtured Caesarism. Eventually, and almost ineluctably, those who maintained the empire would destroy the republic.

The Machiavellianism of a number of Commonwealthmen, such as James Harrington, Henry Neville and Algernon Sidney, was pronounced. Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), for instance, can be read as a theoretical attempt to resolve the 'imperial problem': to reconcile the republic for increase with the republic for preservation and found an 'immortal commonwealth'. Like Machiavelli, and like most Englishmen at the time, he endorsed the legitimacy and prerogatives of conquest. Ireland provided a text-book example, and the Cromwellian conquest and settlement of 1649–53 is bracketed at either end of the century by Sir John Davies' *Discoverie of the true causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued* (1612) and William Molyneux's *The case of Ireland being bound by acts of parliament in England, stated* (1698); both of which, in different ways and for different reasons, advance arguments premised on the transparent legality of conquest, and the absolute authority of the conqueror over the conquered. When Marchamont Nedham wrote in 1650 'the power of the sword ever hath been the foundation of titles to government', he is clearly representative of the political thinking of the day which flourished, for obvious reasons, in the immediate wake of the regicide. When Nedham adds:

those whose title is supposed unlawful and founded merely upon force, yet being possessed of authority, may lawfully be obeyed. Not *may* they only, but they *must*; else by the judgment of the civilians such as refuse may be punished as seditious and traitorous, the victors being allowed, *jure gentium*, to use all means for securing what they have gotten and to exercise a right of dominion over the conquered party.¹⁴

Substitute 'state', 'kingdom' or 'country' for 'party' and he is equally clearly aligned with conquest theory. The following year, the Independent and Cromwellian propagandist Thomas Waring drew on scripture to affirm 'the justness of conquest', concluding 'that the mutations and revolutions of crowns and kingdoms, governments and governors, the breaking and casting out of nations, are the effect of divine ordination'.¹⁵

Sidney allowed that issues of morality and justice obtained in respect of conquest; he also understood, with Machiavelli, that unless properly executed

¹⁴ Marchamont Nedham, *The case of the Commonwealth of England, stated* (1650), ed. P.A. Knachel, (Charlottesville, 1969), pp. 27–8.

¹⁵ Thomas Waring, *An Answer to certain seditious and Jesuitical Queres, heretofore purposely and maliciously cast out, to retard and hinder the English forces in their going over into Ireland* (London, 1651), pp. 45–6.

and carefully managed the ‘enlargement of dominion’ could fatally undermine the commonwealth. But such caveats barely moderated the full force of Sidney’s authentic voice. ‘Whole nations’ he contended:

may forfeit their liberty by cruelty, perfidy, and injustice, giving right of war against themselves, and being conquered become slaves ... this is right of conquest, which though generally rejected by some as unjust, grounded only on force, I think is sometimes most just. For as there are just causes of war, he that is conqueror in such a war does justly enjoy the fruits of his victory.¹⁶

The robustness of Sidney’s views on war and conquest matched his opinions on race, and at bottom the imperial project is usually predicated upon ethno-cultural (and religious) presuppositions. European assumptions of innate superiority, and perceptions of ‘Asiatic’ barbarism, were deeply rooted in classical antiquity. Sidney cites Aristotle on those brutish nations ‘absolutely incapable of science or governing themselves ... Some of Asia and Africa are said to be of this kind.’¹⁷ The political point, reiterated by Nedham, being that such nations ‘ever have lived and do for the most part continue in miserable slavery at the will of imperious tyrants’.¹⁸ The rhetoric of eradicating barbarism reinforced the logic of extending empire.

Sidney’s modern biographer describes his ‘written republicanism [as] a retrospective creation, its focus sharpened by Cromwell’s tyranny’ in the mid-1650s.¹⁹ By 1652, as a member of the Council of State, he was deeply involved in Anglo-Irish, Anglo-Scottish and, indeed, Anglo-Dutch affairs; drafting legislation for an Irish settlement and serving on the parliamentary committee for ‘the Uniting of Scotland into one Commonwealth with England’.²⁰ Undoubtedly that experience of rapid territorial aggrandisement helped confirm his later enthusiasm for republican military prowess. On the matter of Irish backwardness, however, no such retrospective gloss was required since, from 1649 onwards, Commonwealthmen – saints, soldiers and republicans – recycled with gusto a readymade script, first written in the twelfth century. Milton said nothing new when he blasted the ‘absurd and savage customs ... the true barbarisme and obdurate wilfulness’ of the Irish. Nor did Waring who itemised their ‘innate and Epidemicke laziness ... bestial lewdness, and consummate impiety’.²¹ In 1653 another pamphleteer stigmatised the ‘eluding and circumventing subtilties’, ‘cunning’ and perennial

¹⁶ Algernon Sidney, *Court Maxims*, ed. H.W. Blom, E.H. Mulier and R. Janse (Cambridge, 1996), p. 199.

¹⁷ Sidney, *Court Maxims*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Nedham, *Case of the Commonwealth of England*, p. 113.

¹⁹ J. Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic, 1623–1677* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 105.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

²¹ Milton and Waring cited in Carlin, ‘Extreme or Mainstream?’, p. 216.

sedition of ‘the imbogged Irish’.²² According to James Harrington, the inhabitants of the neighbouring island were ‘a slothful and pusillanimous people’.²³ And, if the degenerate condition of the native Irish appeared obvious, so too did the remedy for that condition: conquest and reform.

At the outset of the English parliamentary army’s expedition to Ireland, one regime propagandist, John Dillingham, argued:

Where people do not acknowledge an eternall being, nor live according to laws of nature and reason ... others may goe and possesse those Countries and give them some ... some are of opinion, that if by Laws intruded on a rude people they be made ... to know God and enrich themselves, they are not wronged but righted, and this is not a doing of evill that good may come, no more then to take a wilde beast and make it tame and usefull to him that tooke it ... if the Irish be more brutish then Indians, why may it not be reasonable to tame such wilde beasts had they never been in any kinde so cruell and bloody to the English.²⁴

Dillingham, an Independent, spoke for England. Harrington, a republican, spoke for mankind (and England too). ‘To ask’, he declared in *Oceana*, ‘whether it bee lawfull for a commonwealth to aspire unto the Empire of the world, is to ask whether it be lawfull for her to do her duty; or to put the world into a better condition than it was before.’²⁵ Harrington imagined that ‘better condition’ in essentially political terms. Yet more than any other republican theorist he understood the economic foundations of power. He sought to limit the accumulation and concentration of land and wealth, and in the case of Ireland and Scotland to break the grip of the landowning elites on their tenantry. The implications and potential of such policies were indeed ‘radical’, but that did not make either Harrington or his fellow republican ideologues democrats or Levellers. On the contrary, English republicans of the 1650s are sometimes depicted as ‘aristocratic’ and ‘oligarchic’.²⁶ Harrington and Sidney were certainly patrician figures; early modern republican conceptions of liberty did not entail popular sovereignty, while republican definitions of ‘the people’ excluded the working poor (Milton, for example, openly scorned the fickle ‘multitude’).²⁷ But ‘radicalism’ may come in many forms, including social

²² Anon., *The Present Posture and Condition of Ireland* (London, 1652), pp. 6, 9.

²³ James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A system of politics*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge, 1992), p. 6.

²⁴ Carlin, ‘Extreme or Mainstream?’, p. 215.

²⁵ Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, p. 227.

²⁶ S.D. Glover, ‘The Putney Debates: Popular versus Elitist Republicanism’, *P&P*, 164 (1999): pp. 47–80.

²⁷ C. Hill, ‘James Harrington and the People’, in C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958; London, 1990), pp. 289–302; Milton, *Readie & Easie Way*, in *The Complete Prose Works*, 7, p. 422.

and economic reform agendas designed to better the condition of archaic and inequitable colonial or 'provincial' societies.

The high disdain for the low breeding of the English soldier-settlers – 'churls' and 'sullage'; 'the dirty rump of loutish craftsmen' – displayed by the native Gaelic poets, clients of an ancient nobility, indicates that they too recognised that a *social* as well as a political upheaval was under way.²⁸ Unsurprisingly, those more generally at the sharp end of massacre, transplantation, transportation, confiscation, oppressive laws and foreign rule were more ambivalent (than Harrington or Dillingham) about the benefits bestowed upon them by metropolitan largesse. Nevertheless, the blood-drenched record of the Cromwellians need not obscure the genuine urge 'to put the world into a better condition than it was before'. At first sight that impulse appears to be primarily religious and evangelical. Oliver Cromwell himself exulted to 'find the people' in the province of Munster 'very greedy after the Word and flocking to Christian meetings'.²⁹ But, upon closer scrutiny, popery, in Cromwellian analyses, was more a malignant symptom of Irish barbarism, rather than its root cause.³⁰ The Catholic clergy, they believed, deliberately kept the laity in a state of ignorance, and that once the power of that clergy was broken true religion would triumph. Cromwellian images of Irish debasement, in fact, came closer to heathenism than to popery. Along with popery, therefore, the reformers planned to root out a parasitic and archaic social structure.

Recent historians of sixteenth-century Ireland have modified the venerable paradigm of the 'Tudor reconquest' with a new emphasis on the imposition of 'reform'.³¹ Viewed from that perspective, the Cromwellian episode represents not so much a radical new departure as a terrific intensification of an established *mentalité*, and of processes already haltingly in train. It also anticipated, albeit more ruthlessly, nineteenth-century British conceptions of Ireland as a site for wholesale social engineering. Ireland thought the regicide and legal reformer John Cook 'was like a white paper, apt to receive any good impression'. And, indeed, as chief justice of the province of Munster in the 1650s, Cook attempted

²⁸ C. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Five Seventeenth-century Political Poems* (Dublin, 1952), p. 37, ll. 34–35, p. 45, l. 212, p. 95, l. 293.

²⁹ W.C. Abbott (ed.), *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (4 vols, Cambridge, MA, 1937–47), 2, pp. 186–7.

³⁰ This case is made for Sir John Temple and English perceptions of the Irish in the 1640s by K.M. Noonan, "'The Cruell Pressure of an Enraged, Barbarous People": Irish and English identity in seventeenth-century policy and propaganda', *HJ*, 41 (1998): pp. 151–77.

³¹ C. Brady, *The Chief Governors: The Rise and Fall of Reform Government in Tudor Ireland, 1536–1588* (Cambridge, 1994).

to reconstitute the legal system according to his precept that the administration of justice should be ‘speedy, cheap and sure ... morall, rationally and equitable’.³²

In the first flush of total victory, and certified by providence, a great, indeed unique, opportunity now presented itself to God’s chosen instruments, for ‘doing justice amongst these poor people ... who have been accustomed to as much injustice, tyranny and oppression from their landlords’ as any people in Christendom.³³ The Irish nobility, wrote an anonymous pamphleteer in 1650, maintain their authority over the people ‘with cruelty, taxations, rites of their country, barbarousness in their creations and installments into the successions of their predecessors’. That nobility would now have to be broken and, ‘to destroy their petty dominion, the people may be taken under the immediate protection of the state, and what land they hold in their lords, may not be rented according to arbitrary uncertain assessments, but certain rents and sums, as our farmers in England’.³⁴ And all this would parallel the reign of justice soon to follow the crushing of the landed elites in Scotland and ‘be a good precedent to England it self’.³⁵

Explanations and justifications of the conquest of Ireland thus combined assertions of providence, conventional political theory, retribution for 1641, moral obligation and strategic necessity. In light of the near consensus of English opinion on the subjugation of Ireland, and of the deep antipathy towards popery, ‘it is remarkable’, observes Christopher Hill, ‘that any voices were raised on the other side. But some were.’ The Leveller William Walwyn, for example, condemned ‘an unlawfull war, a cruel and bloody work to go to destroy the Irish natives for their consciences ... and to drive them from their proper natural and native rights’; and argued that ‘the cause of the Irish natives in seeking their just freedoms, immunities and liberties, was the very same with our cause here’.³⁶ The evidence for sentiments of this kind is scant and uncertain, and those who held them were unquestionably a tiny minority, yet the real-world political insignificance of the anti-imperialists need not detract from their political courage, moral integrity, perspicuity or intellectual consistency. The most vigorous articulation of their position is presented in *Queries propounded to the consideration of those who are*

³² John Cook, *Monarchy no creature of Gods making, &c. wherein is proved by scripture and reason, that monarchical government is against the mind of God* (Waterford, 1652), pp. xii, xvii; T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English Government and Reform in Ireland 1649–1660* (London, 1975), pp. 268–70.

³³ Abbott (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 2, pp. 186–7.

³⁴ Anon., *A discourse concerning the affaires of Ireland* (London, 1650), p. 11.

³⁵ Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, pp. 255–6.

³⁶ Hill, ‘Seventeenth-century English radicals and Ireland’, p. 142; Walwyn’s words (which are reported second-hand) in John Price, *Walwins Wiles* (London: H[enry] C[ripps] and L[odowick] L[loyd], 1649), reprinted in W. Haller and G. Davies (eds), *The Leveller Tracts, 1647–1653* (New York, 1944), pp. 288–9, 310.

intended for the service of Ireland (1649).³⁷ As in the ‘Sixth Quere’, the anonymous author never equivocates, asking:

Whether Julius Caesar, Alexander the great, William Duke of Normandie, or anie other the great Conquerors of the world, were anie other then so mannie great and lawless thieves; and whether it bee not altogether as unjust to take our neighbor Nations, Lands, and liberties from them, as our neighbor’s goods of our own Nation?

Or again, in the ‘Tenth Quere’:

Whether those that contend for their freedom (as the English now) shall not make themselvs altogether unexcusable, if they shall intrench upon other’s freedoms: and whether it bee not an especial note, and characterizing badge of a true pattern of freedom, to indeavor the just freedom of all men, as well as his own?³⁸

One critic of conquest whose name we do know is the maverick MP Henry Marten, who cautioned in 1646 that:

Hee that would state ye quarell in Ireland upon religion & thinkes this way to make Christendome a protestant is descended sure from those gallant ancestors that ly buried in Palestine whither they were caryed with a fervent desire to recover ye holly land, & beat ye wholl world into Christianity.

Marten later opposed post-conquest legislation for ‘settling’ Ireland.³⁹

Based on their record of royalism and, as they saw it, treachery, staunch republicans like Marten regarded the Scots with open hostility. ‘Concerning the Scots’, wrote Nedham, ‘I am sorry I must waste paper upon this nation.’⁴⁰ But before drawing parallels between the Irish and Scottish experience in the 1650s it is worth pointing up the differences. Generally, distinctions between Scots and Irish, or Highlander and Lowlander, were recognised; prejudices were finely graded. In Cromwell’s own words, ‘I had rather be overrun with a Cavalierish interest than a Scotch interest; I had rather be overrun with a Scottish interest, than an Irish interest; and I think of all this is most dangerous’.⁴¹ That sentiment is borne out, moreover, by his letters to Speaker Lenthall after Drogheda and Dunbar. The massacre at Drogheda Cromwell considered ‘a righteous judgment

³⁷ Again it should be noted that this tract is not extant. It is reproduced in Thomas Waring’s query-by-query refutation, *An Answer to certain seditious and Jesuitical Querres*.

³⁸ Waring, *An Answer to certain seditious and Jesuitical Querres*, pp. 42–3, 52.

³⁹ Barber, *Revolutionary rogue*, p. 14; Scott, *Algernon Sidney*, p. 100.

⁴⁰ Nedham, *Case of the Commonwealth of England*, p. 71.

⁴¹ Abbott (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 2, p. 38.

of God upon those barbarous wretches who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood'. After Dunbar he reflected that 'since we came into Scotland, it hath been our desire and longing to have avoided blood in this business, by reason that God hath a people here fearing his name, though deceived'.⁴² Scotland was Protestant and, in contrast to the Scotophobic Nedham, English sectaries retained wary respect for the stiff-necked people of the northern kingdom. From that standpoint, religion:

Binde[s] us to be more zealous in this quarrel against Ireland then against Scotland. For if we look backwards to the expiation that's due to God for a whole land defiled with blood, or if we look forward to the reformation of a whole stock and race of men as blinde as their Images, we must needs say the cause in Ireland is more Christian then the cause of Scotland. In Scotland we are to regulate matters of Discipline, in Ireland we are to establish matters of faith.⁴³

Scotland also differed from Ireland in that, while the English occasionally referred to it as a 'province', it was not, rhetorically or theoretically, treated as a colony, and upon that distinction rested the principle of a supposedly 'equal' union.

Scotland nonetheless cried out for reform. Highlanders in particular exhibited many of the characteristics of the unregenerate Irish. In the Highlands, 'the people generally speak Irish, go only with plads about their middle, both men and women. There are scarce any houses of stone, but only earth and Turfes.' And, again like the Irish, they were 'very simple and ignorant in the things of God, and some of them live even as brutish as heathens'.⁴⁴ The Lowlands, though more anglicised, did not obtain to English standards either. Accordingly, in October 1651, the *Declaration of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, concerning the Settlement of Scotland* announced that:

the people of *Scotland* who were vassals, or Tenants to, and had dependency upon the Noble-men and Gentry ... shall not only be pardoned for all acts past, but be set free from their former dependencies and bondage-services, and shall be admitted as Tenants, freeholders, and heritors, to farm, hold, inherit, and enjoy from and under this Common-wealth, proportions of the said confiscated and forfeited lands, under such easie rents, and reasonable conditions, as may enable them, their heirs and posterity, to live with a more comfortable subsistence then

⁴² Abbott (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 2, pp.125–8, 321–5.

⁴³ Anon., *Present Posture and Condition of Ireland*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ C. Firth (ed.), *Scotland and the Commonwealth. Letters and Papers Relating to the Military Government of Scotland, from August 1651 to December 1653* (Edinburgh, 1895), pp. 362–3.

formerly, and like a free people, delivered (through Gods goodnesse) from their former slaveries, vassalage, and oppressions.⁴⁵

Less than a year later *Mercurius Politicus* boasted of:

the regall power of their Lairds of mannors being justly abolished. We have eased the people much in their fees, and from those extortions that have been frequent here; and hope we have secured them from the like Abuses in the future. Justice was wont to be open and free for none formerly but great men; but now it flows equally to all; which will in a short time make them sensible from what Bondage they are deliver'd.⁴⁶

This is conquest as deliverance, and the transmission of reform, justice, freedom, improvement and modernity.

In James Harrington's lightly fictionalised 'utopia' the grateful people of Marpesia (Scotland) 'received their liberty, the yoke of the nobility being broken by the Commonwealth of Oceana' (England).⁴⁷ Later, nodding to Cicero, and echoing Nedham's earlier vision of the English republic delivering 'the whole *Creation* ... into freedom', he imagines Oceana undertaking more 'the patronage than the empire of the world ... A Commonwealth, I say, of this make is a minister of God upon earth, to the end that the world may be governed with righteousness.'⁴⁸ But mindful of Machiavelli's warning that no republic could risk standing still, and of the dangers which empire then posed to the free state which made it, Harrington sets out in *Oceana* to reconcile the republic for preservation with the republic for increase. Long-term, indeed perpetual, political stability rested, he believed, in the tight regulation of property distribution: 'equality of estates causeth equality of power, and equality of power is the liberty not only of the Commonwealth, but of every man'.⁴⁹ This 'balance' would be achieved by the enforcement of an 'Agrarian' – a law fixing the limits of individual property ownership. An 'equality of power', both domestic and foreign, would thus prevent the 'overbalance' on which mixed and absolute monarchies were founded, and check the growth in

⁴⁵ S. Terry (ed.), *The Cromwellian Union. Papers Relating to the Negotiations for an Incorporating Union between England and Scotland, 1651–1652* (Edinburgh, 1902), p. xxiii.

⁴⁶ *Mercurius Politicus*, 5 June 1652, in Terry (ed.), *Cromwellian Union*, pp. 180–81. Alas, the hope that the common people had been 'secured ... from the like Abuses in the future' is belied by the striking similarity of the language used to describe the post-Culloden reforms in 1746–47.

⁴⁷ Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Nedham quoted in J. Scott, *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 221; Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, p. 221.

⁴⁹ Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, p. 20.

the provinces of the sort of over-mighty subjects who had overturned the Roman Republic. Interestingly, although Harrington proposes an ‘Agrarian’ [law] of £2,000 for Oceana and Panopea (Ireland), Marpesia’s upper limit is set at £500. Whereas there is apparently little to be feared from a resurgent Irish nobility, the yoke of Scotland’s landed classes, it seems, had not been quite as broken as he earlier asserts.

The people of that country are little better than the cattle of the nobility ... and in settling the agrarian, you give the people not only liberty, but lands; which makes your protection necessary to their security, and their contribution due to your protection, as to their own safety.⁵⁰

And so, liberty and equality, the boon of Oceana’s empire, would lock ‘the people’ of Marpesia into a willing allegiance.

In 1659, one of the chief architects of the union of 1652, Sir Henry Vane, reminded the Scots of their debt to the English Commonwealth: ‘we conquered them, and gave them the fruit of our conquest in making them free denizens with us’. Vane spoke in the debate on Scottish and Irish representation in Richard Cromwell’s Parliament, and Anthony Ashley Cooper agreed with him that the Scots ‘are persons very fit to be united to us; of the same religion’. Henry Neville pointed out that ‘they have a law which cannot be applicable to our laws. They must not have Englishmen imposed upon them by letters to enslave them and us too ... it is absolutely to enslave and to reduce them to a province.’⁵¹ The image of the Scots and Scotland which cumulatively emerges from these protracted exchanges is one of fellow Protestants, a nation of laws and a free, if troublesome people. The ‘Irish’ – a designation repudiated by a number of the English MPs from Ireland – did not fare so well. ‘They are still in the state of a province’ said Vane.⁵² And he had a point. Crucially, whereas Scotland had been issued a tender of union and Scots representatives had gone through the motions of ‘negotiation’, Ireland, underlining its inferior and subordinate constitutional status, had been silently incorporated. Much later, Neville, who had opposed appointing Englishmen to positions of authority in Scotland, recommended that practice for Ireland. ‘So in provincial governments, if they be wisely ordered’, argues one of the interlocutors in *Plato Redivivus*, ‘no man must have any the least share in the managing affairs of state, but strangers; or such as have no share or part in the possessions there; for else they will have a very good opportunity of shaking off their yoke.’ ‘That is true’, replies the ‘English Gentleman’, ‘and we are so wise here (I mean our ancestors were) as to have made a law, that no native in Ireland can be deputy there.’⁵³

⁵⁰ Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, pp. 101, 113.

⁵¹ J. Rutt (ed.), *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq. member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell, from 1656 to 1659* (4 vols, London, 1828), 4, pp. 178, 188–9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵³ Robbins (ed.), *Two English Republican Tracts*, p. 94.

But, while the Commonwealthmen of 1659 were generally positive about the Scots and their entitlements, the entire purpose of the debate was to debar them and their Irish counterparts from taking their seats. The argument was legal: the 1652 ‘act’ for Scotland had been designed for a commonwealth, not a protectorate, and was therefore now defunct; whereas for Ireland’s representation no legal footing existed at all. However, the true motive of the anti-Protectorate republicans, only rarely alluded to, but understood by all, was to neutralise a solid phalanx of hand-picked placemen. In fact, the ‘Scottish’ and ‘Irish’ MPs were mostly English ‘chosen at White-hall, whereof some had hardly been ever nearer Scotland than Grays-Inn’.⁵⁴ And they could indeed be relied upon to vote for the ‘court’. Political manoeuvre and legalistic wrangling thus dominated the debate, but it sometimes ascended, nonetheless, into the rarefied altitudes of historical analogy and contested national identities. As one contributor put it, invoking Pliny, ‘let us not, in building another’s city, pull down our own. The Romans did never give *jus civitatis*, but to those that were naturalized by a long experienced union. I would have them naturalized’.⁵⁵

It is possible that this debate inspired Michael Hawke’s celebration of empire, *The History of the Union of the four famous kingdoms of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland* published that same year.⁵⁶ Hawke does not have an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. He does, however, make fleeting appearances in a few modern studies of seventeenth-century political thought: in one account as a ‘massively learned, eclectic ... avowedly Hobbesian’ and ‘providentialist imperialist[t]’; in another as one whose ‘importance as a theorist [is] slight’.⁵⁷ Before *History of the Union* Hawke had written at least three hefty pamphlets in support of the Cromwellian regime: *The right of dominion, and property of liberty* (1656), *The grounds of the lawes of England* (1657) and, in reply to *Killing Noe Murder* – the anti-Protectoral pamphlet advocating tyrannicide – the crisply entitled *Killing is Murder* (1657). Hawke was no republican then, providing not only *de facto* defences of the Protectorate but dedicating his second book, *The right of dominion*, to Cromwell, ‘*Magno, Magnae Britanniae etc Principi et Protectori, Patri Patriae, et semper Augusto*’, and elsewhere describing the Lord Protector as ‘our Prince, a *Caesar* for valour, *Augustus* for fortune, and for

⁵⁴ Slingsby Bethel, *A true and impartial narrative of the most material debates and passages in the late parliament* (London, 1659), p. 10.

⁵⁵ Rutt (ed.), *Diary of Thomas Burton*, 4, p. 190.

⁵⁶ I attribute this book to Michael Hawke because its author is given as ‘MH’. MH, otherwise identified as ‘Mich. Hawk’, is also the author of *The grounds of the lawes of England* (1657). In addition, the endorsement of power hovering behind every page is consistent with Hawke’s earlier work.

⁵⁷ D. Armitage, ‘The Cromwellian Protectorate and the languages of empire’, *HJ*, 35 (1992): pp. 545–6; Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (London, 1954), pp. 93–4.

pro prowess and prudence second to neither'.⁵⁸ His Machiavelli is the Machiavelli of frank *Realpolitik* and *The Prince*, and certainly not the 'divine' and 'incomparable Machiavel', 'the best and most honest of all the modern politicians' later invoked by the Harringtonian republican Neville.⁵⁹ If no republican, he nonetheless cites Livy, while his précis of Roman imperial expansion bears striking resemblance to that of the Florentine's. The difference is not that, in Hawke's view, dominion and empire – in a word, power – are achieved and maintained by force, but that valour and arms, not a free commonwealth, was the font of Roman greatness.

History of the Union is prefaced by general observations on the nature of governments and unions. 'All government is of God', asserts Hawke, 'whether monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical.' God 'removeth and seteth up kings' hence the powers that be, whatever their configuration, are owed obedience. As with Nedham, the *de facto* defence of political authority rests easily alongside standard conquest theory. 'By the rule of war', he notes, 'those who have overcome have power to rule those whom they have overcome, as they please.'⁶⁰ Union is contextualised within the 'two principles of all things, Concord and Discord'; and experience shows that 'petty states are by concord and union augmented, and grand ones by discord and disunion brought to confusion'.⁶¹ Unions here fall into three categories: 'leagues', dynastic amalgams, and union by conquest. The first are useful but temporary; the second are deficient, superficial and *ad hoc* (although some, as in Spain, survived, while others, like Britain, did not); the final category, conquest, is the 'most general and more durable' of the three.⁶²

In addition to Livy, Hawke draws on Sir Edward Coke and Sir Francis Bacon. His chief 'source', however, is the Roman imperial experience. In *History of the Union*, the gaining and the holding of the Roman Empire serves as model, template, exemplar, precedent and inspiration. Britain's empire, he concedes, cannot be compared with Rome's for sheer territorial reach, but does bear comparison in terms of 'quality, and condition,' for, after all, 'our *Orbe Britanne* did follow the tract and steps of the Roman conquerours'.⁶³ Successful emulation of the Roman achievement depended upon a judicious mix of armed force, clemency, and the transmission to the conquered nations of metropolitan laws and language. Sixteenth-century Wales had been integrated with its larger neighbour by 'a union of laws', and by representation in Parliament, thereby admitting the Welsh gentry to 'the highest privileges and chiefest dignities of England, according to the Roman precedent'. During the 1650s the Commonwealth and Protectorate garrisoned Wales – the seat

⁵⁸ Armitage, 'Cromwellian Protectorate and languages of empire', p. 546.

⁵⁹ M[ichael] H[awke], *The History of the Union Of the four famous Kingdoms Of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1659), pp. 11–12; Robbins (ed.), *Two English Republican Tracts*, pp. 81, 92, 97, 155, 168.

⁶⁰ Hawke, *The History of the Union*, 'To the Reader', p. 26.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 9–17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

of refractory royalism – again following Roman practice.⁶⁴ Scotland, though also garrisoned ‘according to the Roman rule’, had been settled ‘in the way of a free state’ and enjoyed ‘union by laws’ and consent.⁶⁵ Finally, Ireland, styled *Britannia Minor* by Ptolemy, and ‘another *Brittain*’ by Hawke, garrisoned and colonised on the ‘Roman model’, now participated in the benefits of peace, unity, and English privileges, laws and language.⁶⁶ As the second-generation settler and advocate of ‘mixed plantation’ Vincent Goodkin put it earlier, the process of incorporating the native Irish ‘into ourselves’ would provide ‘opportunities of communicating better things unto them’.⁶⁷

The supposedly integrated union which Hawke pronounced ‘completely perfected’ and ‘settled’ in 1659 did not survive beyond the publication of a second edition of his book and the restoration of monarchy the following year. Charles II, noted Clarendon, had no wish to ‘build according to Cromwellian models’,⁶⁸ and in 1660 constitutional relationships between the English and the Scottish and Irish kingdoms reverted to the *status quo ante*.

The champions of empire in the 1650s – Milton, Sidney, Nedham, Harrington, Waring, Dillingham, Hawke and others – exhibited a variety of sometimes overlapping political positions. They included Independents, classical republicans, Protestant providentialists and *de facto* theorists. What they shared besides their imperialism was an ingrained and impregnable sense of English superiority – undergirded, more often than not, by a belief in England’s destiny as an elect Nation. Hawke, for example, simply could not conceive of the possibility that the conquered peoples might not welcome the communication of English privileges, laws and language with anything less than unmixed gratitude. Similarly, Commonwealth promises of social, legal and economic reform for Scotland and Ireland were couched in terms of rooting out archaic and inequitable practices and dragging those backward nations into line with English standards. The national cultural confidence is palpable: ‘future generations, we hope, shall acknowledge that the English laws and government introduced into Ireland, shall be as new life to the natives, and yet the incorporation that is intended of both nations, shall make the Irish great gainers by al their losses’.⁶⁹ Nor, in the 1659 parliamentary debates, were the ‘Scottish’ and ‘Irish’ members willing to cede an inch of their Englishness. Some had ‘never saw Scotland, but in a map’, while Sir Thomas Stanley stated

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 66–74, 80–81.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 101, 109–10.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 129–30, 136–7.

⁶⁷ Quoted by T. Barnard, ‘Crises of Identity among Irish Protestants 1641–1685’, *P&P*, 127 (1990): p. 68.

⁶⁸ Cited in W. Ferguson, *Scotland’s Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 141.

⁶⁹ Anon., *Present Posture and Condition of Ireland*, p. 34.

'I am not to speak for Ireland, but for the English in Ireland ... The members for Ireland, and the electors, are all Englishmen.' But perhaps this pride of race is best caught in one Colonel Parsons' happy formula that the House, 'deal no less kindly with the Irish than with the Scotch. They are all English.'⁷⁰ As ethnography this is flat nonsense. As a statement of imperial policy and legal doctrine, any citizen of the Roman Empire would have understood and applauded.

⁷⁰ Rutt (ed.), *Diary of Thomas Burton*, 4, pp. 129, 225, 239.

Chapter 7

Seventeenth-Century Italy and English Radical Movements

Stefano Villani

Seventeenth-century Italian Historiography on the English Revolution

On 3 July 1680, the Inquisitor of Pisa, while questioning in San Gimignano one Sister Francesca Fabbroni – a nun charged and convicted by the Holy Office with feigned holiness – compared her alleged inability to commit sin with that of some English heretics who asserted to be guided by God immediately to such a perfection that made them entirely free from sin that they had been divinely appointed and that they had reached such a degree of perfection that they were entirely free from sin.¹ The Inquisitor's comment is unfortunately too brief to ascertain precisely whom he was thinking of, but it is almost certain that his words contained a distant echo of the religious debates that had taken place in England thirty years earlier, when the Quakers and Ranters, in their search on earth for the perfection of Adam before the Fall, were accused by their enemies of licentious and blasphemous behaviour. It is, of course, possible that the Inquisitor – who had never visited England – saw these religious groups and the Puritans as one and the same thing, since the name of the latter might well have seemed to him to refer to their supposed purity and sanctity. The contrast between what these heretics proclaimed and the name that they had given themselves was, at that time, almost a commonplace in Catholic writings. To give but one example, in 1677 the Sicilian scholar Antonio Lupis published a romanticised hagiographic biography of the Scottish-born Capuchin friar John Forbes (1570/71–1606) in which he sharply criticised the Puritans who, notwithstanding their 'purest name', were actually 'more guilty because of their execrable behaviour'.²

The Inquisitor's comment (many similar examples could be given) demonstrates that in seventeenth-century Italy even people such as the Inquisitor of Pisa who, so

¹ 'In Anglia sunt haeretici, qui asserunt ipsos duci immediate a Deo, pervenisse ad talem perfectionem ut ominino peccare non possint'. A transcript of this document, preserved in the Archivio Arcivescovile of Pisa, is printed in Adelisa Malena, 'Suor Francesca Fabbroni: un caso di "affettata santità" nella Toscana degli ultimi Medici' (unpublished dissertation, University of Pisa, 1992–93), p. 229.

² Antonio Lupis, *La Marchesa d'Hunsleij, ovvero l'Amazzone Scozzese* (Venice, 1677), pp. 145–6: 'maggiormente macchiati nei loro esecrandi costumi'.

far as can be surmised, had no specific interest in English history, knew something about English radical movements. When investigating what Italians made of the contemporary political and religious debates in England, the first issue that needs to be established is what information actually arrived in Italy and through which channels. It is important to bear in mind that seventeenth-century England was culturally and politically very distant from Italy. It was uncommon to find Italian intellectuals who spoke English, at least until the last decades of the century, and only Italian merchants who lived in England for commercial reasons or, more rarely, diplomats had some knowledge of the language. The wealthy English merchant communities residing in Livorno, Venice, Genoa and other parts of Italy led separate lives from the local population and there appears to be no grounds for speaking of a real cultural exchange between British and Irish merchants and Italian urban elites. Similarly, British and Irish travellers, who increasingly took their Grand Tour in Italy, were more curious to acquire information about Italy than to provide their hosts with news and commentary about the political and cultural situation in their homeland.

Nonetheless, this did not prevent the vicissitudes of the English Revolution receiving a remarkable amount of attention in contemporary Italian historiography. The exceptional events that resulted in the English Civil Wars and Charles I's trial and public execution made a considerable impact on Italian imaginations to the extent that many Italian authors dealt specifically with these events.³ Vittorio Siri wrote a complete account of English history in the fifteen volumes of *Mercurio* (1644–82), making available for the first time in Italian translation many documents produced during the Civil War from both sides of the conflict. Maiolino Bisaccioni also broadly narrated the events in England (together with those of Catalonia, Portugal, Palermo, Naples, Bogdan Chmielnicki's Poland, the *Fronde* in France, unrest in Turkey and the war of Fermo) in the *Historia delle guerre civili de' nostri tempi* (1652).⁴ Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato examined events in England in the second, third and fourth part of his *Historie* (1641, 1648 and 1651), and in many of his other works.⁵ Girolamo Brusoni summarised the English revolutionary phase

³ S. Villani, 'The English Civil Wars and the Interregnum in Italian Historiography in the 17th century', <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/villani_ecw.html>; I. Rachum, 'The Meaning of "Revolution" in the English Revolution (1648–1660)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995): pp. 195–216; I. Rachum, 'Italian Historians and Emergence of the Term "Revolution", 1644–1659', *History*, 80 (1995): pp. 191–206; P. Messina, 'La rivoluzione inglese e la storiografia italiana del seicento', *Studi storici*, 25 (1984): pp. 725–46; N. Recupero, *Storia provvidenza utopia. Forme ideologiche nel Seicento inglese* (Catania, 1994); M. Barducci, *Oliver Cromwell: negli scritti italiani del Seicento* (Florence, 2005).

⁴ Maiolino Bisaccioni, *Historia delle Guerre Civili di questi ultimi tempi* (Venice, 1652).

⁵ Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, *L'Historia universale ... nella quale si tratta di tutte le guerre occorse in Europa in dieci anni parte prima e seconda* (1652); Galeazzo Gualdo

in the *Istorie universali d'Europa* (1657), in which he charted European events in the thirty-year period between 1627 and 1656, as well as in the *Osservazioni sopra le relationi universali del Botero* (1659).⁶ Between 1642 and 1656 the *Historie memorabili de' nostri tempi* appeared in five parts, edited by Alessandro Zilioli, Maiolino Bisaccioni, Giovan Battista Birago Avogadro and Girolamo Brusoni. The fifth part, entitled *Delle Historie Memorabili che contiene le sollevationi di Stato de nostri tempi*, was edited by Birago Avogadro. Published in 1653, it dealt extensively with events in England and included an Italian translation of the Royalist physician George Bate's Elenchus *Motuum Nuperorum* in Anglia (this was a complete reprint of the translation that had been published the previous year by Birago Avogadro). Significantly, the translator considered Bate's work 'the most substantial, short and faithful account ever to come to light'.⁷

In 1675, the Cassinese monk Pajoli published a biography of Cromwell.⁸ Afterwards Gregorio Leti published the two volumes of *Teatro Britannico* for Robert Scott at London (December 1682) and then, ten years later, the two volumes of the *Vita di Cromwell* (1692).⁹ Beside these historical works there was also a novel and a tragedy set during the English Civil Wars and their aftermath: Bernardo Morando's *Rosalinda* (1650) and Girolamo Graziani's *Cromuele* (1671).¹⁰

What is noteworthy here is both the widespread interest that the English Revolution generated in Italy, and that all Italian historians writing about England during the 1640s and 1650s were unambiguously sympathetic towards the defeated Royalists. Italian historians interpreted English events from the perspective of a shared ideological bias. For them the Civil War had occurred because of Charles's inability to face parliamentary opposition. What was perceived to be Charles's naivety and over-generosity had benefited Oliver Cromwell whose hypocrisy,

Priorato, *Dell'Historia* (Venice, 1648); Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, *Dell'Historie ... Parte quarta nella quale si contengono tutte le cose universalmente occorse dall'anno 1645 sino all'anno 1649* (Venice, 1651); Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, *Dell'Istorie ... Parte quarta dove si tratta di tutte le guerre occorse cio Europa dal 1646 fin al 1650* (1652).

⁶ A second edition of this work was issued in 1671.

⁷ Birago Avogadro, *Delle Historie Memorabili che contiene le sollevationi di Stato de nostri tempi* (Venice, 1653): 'Il più sostantioso, breve e fedele racconto che sia venuto in luce'.

⁸ Alfonso Pajoli, *Vite del Cardinale Giulio Mazarini, e di Oliviero Cromvele* (Venice and Bologna, 1675).

⁹ For Leti, see G. Spini, *Ricerca dei libertini. La teoria dell'impostura nel Seicento italiano* (Rome, 1950; revised and expanded edition, Florence, 1983); F. Barcia, *Un politico dell'età barocca: Gregorio Leti* (Milan, 1983); F. Barcia, *Bibliografia delle opere di Gregorio Leti* (Milan, 1981), pp. 388–408; N. Krivatsy, *Bibliography of the Works of Gregorio Leti* (New Castle, DE, 1982), pp. 33–7.

¹⁰ E. Arata, 'La resistibile ascesa di un narratore secentista: "La Rosalinda" di Bernardo Morando' (unpublished dissertation, University of Parma, 1999–2000); M. Fasce, 'Il "Cromuele" di Girolamo Graziani' (unpublished dissertation, University of Genoa, 1988–89).

cunning and good fortune astonished Italian observers. The reasons for the conflict were therefore to be located solely in the political and social sphere: the Civil Wars were perceived essentially as a conflict between the nobility and aristocracy on the one hand, and the vile mob on the other. This political and social interpretation overshadowed more specific theological issues which lay behind the religious divisions in England. The religious debate, in other words, was read from an explicitly and exclusively ‘socio-political’ perspective.

Heresy is the enemy of the good Principality, because if the former requests freedom, the latter expects strict obedience; one wishes conscience to be dominated by the Prince, the other wishes the Prince to be dominated by conscience; one searches for a multiplicity of opinions in divine things without punishment, the other cannot enjoy the sceptre if the vassals do not have unity in beliefs.¹¹

Thus wrote Maiolino Bisaccioni in the opening pages of his history of the English Civil War (1652), aptly summarising the attitude Italian intellectuals held towards the religious debate that characterised the English Revolution. In a similar vein, Siri wrote:

what principally emerged from the diversity of belief was the discord that has ignited the whole kingdom, threatening the king’s power with a cruel death. This tragic outcome must be a lesson to all princes that loosening the bonds of true religion paves the way for the weakening the bond between princes and their vassals, because being separated from God is a divorce between obedience and the Prince.¹²

The same interpretative scheme also underpinned the Venetian, Tuscan and Genoese diplomatic representatives’ reading of these events. Resident in England during these critical years, their weekly reports provided the principal source of information for seventeenth-century Italian historians writing about the

¹¹ Bisaccioni, *Historia delle Guerre Civili*, part I, p. 3: ‘L’heresia è nimica del buon Principato, perché se quella vuole la libertà, questo desidera un’essatta obbedienza, l’una vuole la coscienza dominata dal Prencipe, l’altro vuole il Prencipe dominato dalla coscienza, l’una ricerca molteplicità de’ pareri nelle cose divine senza punitione, l’altro non può godere lo scettro, se non ha la unità del credere de i Vassalli’.

¹² Vittorio Siri, *Il Mercurio, ovvero historia de’correnti tempi* (15 vols, Casale, Lyons, Paris and Florence: 1644–82), 2, p. 247: ‘dalla diversità delle credenza principalmente n’è ridondata quella discordia, che ha causato una combustione generale del Regno, e minacciata un’aspra morte alla potenza del Re; il cui tragico successo deve documentar i Principi tutti, che ’l sciogliere i legami di vera fede, apre la strada per distacare anco quei del vassallaggio; il separarsi da Dio, essendo un far divortio dall’ubbedienza del Prencipe’.

Revolution. Direct religious motivations are rarely alluded to in their dispatches and even then they tended to be regarded as a smokescreen for real political and social motivations. This was true even for clerics such as Gilles Chaissy, chaplain of the Tuscan resident in London, who sent a series of interesting weekly reports to Rome between 1647 and 1650; Carlo Rossetti, the papal envoy in England from 1639 to 1641; and Giovanni Battista Rinuccini, nuncio in Ireland from 1645 to 1649.¹³

Many seventeenth-century history books published in Italy referred to the English debate about the institutional order which developed between the end of the first Civil War and the immediate aftermath of the regicide. It is possible to find references here to English debates on universal suffrage, the right to property and representation. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Henry Ireton's elaborate constitutional plan, the 'Heads of Proposals' (drawn up in 1647), circulated in several manuscript copies and was published by the historian Vittorio Siri in his bestselling and widely-circulated *Mercurio* (1668). This demonstrates that there was no real fear that the 'democratic' ideas which led to the foundation of the English Republic would find supporters in Italy as well.¹⁴ The *Fronde* demonstrated that the English example could be emulated on the Continent, but Italian commentators did not believe that a 'Parliamentarian' movement could find support in any of the Italian States, much less a movement of 'Levellers'.¹⁵

¹³ S. Villani, 'Per la progettata edizione della corrispondenza dei rappresentanti toscani a Londra: Amerigo Salvetti e Giovanni Salvetti Antelminelli durante il Commonwealth e il Protettorato (1649–1660)', *Archivio storico italiano*, 162 (2004): pp. 109–25; S. Villani, 'La prima rivoluzione inglese nel giudizio delle diplomazie veneziana e genovese', in Elena Fasano Guarini, Renzo Sabbatini and Marco Natalizi (eds), *Repubblicanesimo e Repubbliche nell'Europa di Antico Regime* (Milan, 2007), pp. 105–32. On Rinuccini, see Giuseppe Aiazzi, *Nunziatura in Irlanda di Monsignore Gio. Battista Rinuccini arcivescovo di Fermo negli anni 1645 a 1649* (Florence, 1844), translated into English by Annie Hutton as *The Embassy in Ireland of Monsignor G.B. Rinuccini Archbishop of Fermo in the Years 1645–1649* (Dublin, 1873); T. Ó hÁnracháin, *Catholic Reformation in Ireland. The Mission of Rinuccini 1645–1649* (Oxford, 2002).

¹⁴ S. Villani, 'La prima rivoluzione inglese nelle pagine del "Mercurio" di Vittorio Siri', in E. Fasano Guarini and M. Rosa (eds), *L'informazione politica in Italia (secoli XVI–XVIII). Atti del seminario organizzato dalla Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa e dal Dipartimento di Storia moderna e contemporanea dell'Università di Pisa. Pisa, 23 e 24 giugno 1997* (Pisa, 2001), pp. 137–72.

¹⁵ P. Knachel, *England and the Fronde: The Impact of the English Civil War and Revolution on France* (Ithaca, NY, 1967).

The Italian View of the English Sects

Seventeenth-century Italians were astounded by the proliferation of sects in England in the second half of the 1640s, yet this topic was rarely treated in contemporary historical narratives of the Civil War and Interregnum. Equally significant is that surviving accounts of these religious debates are almost exclusively preserved in travellers' reports of England in which historical matters are treated peripherally – for example, Gregorio Leti's *Teatro Britannico* (1682). Similarly, in the official manuscript account of Cosimo de' Medici's travels in 1669 there is an entire chapter on the state of religion in England, from which emerges Catholic astonishment at the most outlandish and radical sects. The compiler of the report wrote that it was possible then to find in London:

Protestants or Legals, Puritans, Presbyterians, Atheists, Brownists, Adamites, Familists or members of the Family of Love, Anabaptists, Libertines, Independents, Fanatics, Arianes, Antiscripturists, Chiliasts, Antinomians, Arminians, Quintinists, Mennonits, Enthusiasts, Seekers, Sabbatarians, Antisabbatarians, Perfettists, Fotinians, Antitrinitarians, Sceptics, Tremblers or Quakers, Monarchists or Fifth Monarchy, Latitudinarians, Origenistis, Deists, Ranters, or Levellers.¹⁶

For every one of these religious groups – including, significantly, the Levellers – there was an accompanying list of their dogmas and principal beliefs. This report, contained in a lavish manuscript richly illustrated by a series of watercolours and now housed in the Laurentian Library, Florence, was intended from the outset to remain in a manuscript as a 'literary monument'. It was to be shown to guests of Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany from May 1670, and is well known to Anglophone scholars from a printed English translation of 1821.¹⁷ Its author has been often identified as Lorenzo Magalotti, secretary of the Accademia del Cimento and one of the first Italian intellectuals to appreciate English literary culture (having some familiarity with the language, he had been the first to attempt an Italian translation of *Paradise Lost*, book I). This intriguing attribution is probably erroneous, even though it is likely that Magalotti was a member of the scholarly team charged with preparing the official report of Cosimo's journey.¹⁸

¹⁶ A.M. Crinò (ed.), *Un principe di Toscana in Inghilterra e in Irlanda nel 1669. Relazione ufficiale del viaggio di Cosimo de' Medici tratta dal "Giornale" di L. Magalotti con gli acquerelli palatini* (Rome, 1968), pp. 214–15.

¹⁷ 'Relazione del viaggio di Spagna'. *Travels of Cosmo III., Grand Duke of Tuscany through England during the reign of King Charles the Second (1669)* (London, 1821).

¹⁸ S. Villani, 'La religione degli inglesi e il viaggio del principe. Note sulla Relazione Ufficiale del viaggio di Cosimo de' Medici in Inghilterra (1669)', *Studi Secenteschi*, 45 (2004): pp. 175–94.

The official report's long digression on the 'State of the religion' in England has often been cited as a first-hand account. It is, however, based entirely on a book published in Latin at Prague: the Irish friar Anthony Bruodin's *Propugnaculum Catholicae Veritatis* (1669), which describes the religious panorama of the 1640s and 1650s in a malevolent but informed manner. Indeed, the digression is a literal translation of large portions of this extremely interesting Latin text. Bruodin's polemical work would reward a more sustained analysis. The section on the Quakers is particularly interesting since one of the sources cited by Bruodin is the text of another Irish Franciscan who had been James Nayler's fellow prisoner in a Bristol gaol. This Irish Franciscan, moreover, was subsequently involved in the trial of John Perrot and John Luffe trial at Rome – probably as a translator (the two Quakers appear to have gone to Rome intending to convert the Pope, of which more will be said below).¹⁹ Two sources cited in Bruodin's *Propugnaculum* are worth highlighting: *De Statu Ecclesiae Britannicae Hodierno* (1647), published by the Presbyterian historian Georg Horn under the pseudonym Honorius Reggius, and the anonymous *De hodierno statu ecclesiarum in Anglia, Wallia, Scotia, & Hibernia*, probably published in Germany in 1654 (and issued in a number of editions and translations that year). Both these texts, which ultimately derived from Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena* (1646), were used extensively by the Polish Protestant historian Lucas de Linda in his description of the geography, institutions, religion, habits and customs of the countries of the world, *Descriptio Orbis & omnium eius rerumpublicarum* (1655). Indeed, in de Linda's *Descriptio*, the section on England practically incorporated the *De hodierno statu ecclesiarum* and is significant in this context because Linda's work was translated into Italian by Maiolino Bisaccioni in 1660, with further editions issued in 1664 and 1672. The part dealing with England, however, was abbreviated since Bisaccioni omitted 'the things related by the author about various churches, because ultimately they had a Calvinistic flavour'.²⁰ Nevertheless, it was through such books that the majority of information on English religious sects circulated in seventeenth-century Italy. Moreover, Edward Chamberlayne's *Angliae Notitia or the Present State of England* (1669) was translated into French at Amsterdam as *L'Etat présent de l'Angleterre* (1671–72). With regards to the world of radical sectarians, the sources of all these texts were mostly works by English heresiographers. Consequently, the image of this milieu that reached Italy was one of madness and meaningless extravagances dangerous to civil life and political order.²¹

¹⁹ S. Villani, 'Conscience and Convention: the Young Furlly and the "Hat Controversy"', in S. Hutton (ed.), *Benjamin Furlly 1646–1714: A Quaker Merchant and His Milieu* (Florence, 2007), pp. 87–109.

²⁰ Maiolino Bisaccioni, *Le Relazioni et Descrittioni universali et particolari del Mondo di Luca di Linda* (Venice, 1664), pp. 298–9: 'le cose di varie Chiese dette dall'authore, perché tutte vanno a finire ad un segno Calvinistico'.

²¹ Cf. *De hodierno statu ecclesiarum in Anglia, Wallia, Scotia, & Hibernia, Narratiuncula* (1654), p. 16. The British Library suggests that it was published in the Low

Returning to the Florentine manuscript of Cosimo de' Medici's journey through England, what is interesting with regard to the Italian view of English radical movements is that it was felt necessary to insert a long chapter on the religious affairs of a Protestant country. This official report was evidently destined to celebrate the intellectual curiosity of a prince who, before ascending to power, had decided to travel throughout Europe, crossing political, linguistic and religious frontiers on the way. Equally significant is that the long digression does not tally with what Cosimo and his retinue witnessed in England since there was little trace in 1669 of the sectarian milieu that had turned the world upside down during the Revolution. That the report's compiler relied on a printed account rather than information he could have obtained from intellectuals accompanying Cosimo, suggests that he wanted to give a conventional, stereotypical image of the English religious scene. Grand Prince Cosimo's companions on his journey – Magalotti, Filippo Corsini and Giovan Battista Gornia – had written notes or diaries about their travels in England. Religious issues, however, were treated not only expeditiously but at times also very imprecisely – demonstrating the scant interest provoked by these aspects of English society for Italian audiences. When, after many years, they compiled the official report, they described the religious scene using the negative cliché that from the beginning of the Revolution had defined England in continental Europe: a country swarming with bizarre and manifold heresies. The official report's chapter on the 'State of religion' in England is therefore a kind of homage to the exotic, in which a constructed baroque bestiary of the spirit was preferred to analytic description and serious understanding. In these pages reality is replaced by an imaginary England populated by dozens of mutually hostile sects, meticulously classified according to their partisan dogmas.²²

Italian heresiographers also maintained this approach. Thus the didactic value of English events was cited by both Domenico Bernini and Alfonso Maria de Liguori in their eighteenth-century treatments of English sects. Writing about the divisions between Protestants in *Istoria dell'eresie colle loro confutazioni* (*History of Heresies and of their Confutations*, 1772), Liguori referred to the Quakers, Ranters and Levellers as instances of the insanity to which abandoning the Catholic Church could lead, submitting evidence of their theological and political radicalism:

Countries [shelf mark 489.g.23. (17.)]. Cf. *Catalogue of Books Printed in the German-Speaking Countries ... from 1601 to 1700* (London, 1994), D230, D231, D232.

²² Magalotti's report on Cosimo's travels in 1669 is held at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, *Conventi soppressi*, G.9. 1863. Magalotti fell ill in England and so did not write anything concerning his stay there. There are some notes by him among his manuscripts, see S. Villani, 'Tre filze di documenti magalottiani presso la Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library dell'Università di Yale', *Studi Secenteschi*, 48 (2007): pp. 386–90.

there are *Quacheri*, or *Tremolanti* [Quakers or Tremblers], who regard themselves as being perfect in everything in this life ... reject all the Religious ceremonies, and also the civilian ones ... They hold that after this life there is neither Paradise, nor Hell for souls ... the *Randeri* [Ranters] say that nothing that nature hungers for is filthy and illicit ... the *Revelleri* [Levellers] are enemies of political order, and they want all men to be equal in goods and in honours; and therefore they very often instigate seditious acts against Magistrates.²³

In these Italian reports about English religious debates it is possible to discern a certain irony in dealing with the beliefs of Interregnum radicals, and more space is devoted to expressions of astonishment than indignation – the latter being reserved for the treatment of Catholics in England. In their eyes, the sects are the paradoxical fruit of an intolerable religious tolerance which had excluded the true Church. This proliferation of outlandish religious opinions was a consequence of the refusal of the tradition and mediation of the Church in reading the Holy Scriptures; and as a result of the religious politics of tolerance towards all religious opinions except Catholicism. These are the two principal accusations with which the English were charged. The English example demonstrated that religious tolerance and the rejection of tradition inevitably resulted in the most extraordinary variety of opinions and, eventually, atheism.

In Italian literature – even in more strictly theological works like Domenico Bernini's *Historia di tutte l'heresie* (*History of all the Heresies*, 1711) – English sects are not even considered worthy of refutation; typically the lists of English heresies limit themselves to ironic descriptions of a sort of phenomenology of the peculiarities of the spirit.²⁴ There is more sarcasm than hatred in these descriptions. Polemic is reserved for Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth, all of whom are declared guilty of separating England from the Catholic Church – the proliferation of sects during the Civil Wars and Interregnum being regarded as the bitter fruit of this first wicked act. In contrast to the divisions among Protestants they emphasise the Catholic world's unity – a topic that was resumed, with quite different theoretical efficaciousness, by Bossuet in his *Histoire des Variations des églises protestantes*. In his novel *Rosalinda* (1650), Bernardo Morando narrated a troubled love story set against the backdrop of turbulent events in England and the War of Candia. Significantly, he allows a Catholic to voice these thoughts to an English Protestant:

²³ Alfonso Maria de' Liguori, *Historia di tutte l'heresie descritta da Domenico Bernino* (Rome, 1705–09): 'Vi sono i *Quacheri*, o sieno *Tremolanti*, che si stimano in tutto perfetti in questa vita ... Tengono che dopo questa vita non vi è né Paradiso, né Inferno per le anime ... Vi sono poi i *Randeri* facilmente della stessa Sett ache dicono niuna cosa esser turpe ed illecita che la natura appetisce ... I *Revelleri* [*sic*] son nemici dell'ordine politico, e questi vogliono, che tutti gli uomini debbano esser eguali nelle robe, e negli onori; e perciò costoro sono frequenti a muover sedizioni contra i Magistrati.'

²⁴ Domenico Bernini, *Historia di tutte l'heresie* (4 vols, Venice, 1711), 4, p. 612.

But outside of the womb of the Roman Church where does the unity of the Faith lodge? In your England perhaps, all divided into Protestants, Puritans, Presbyterians, Politicians, Independents, Egalitarians and many other Sects in disagreement with one another?²⁵

These views were quite uniform in Italy. In *Marchesa d'Hunsleij* (1677), Antonio Lupis after having criticized the Puritans, condemned Presbyterians as 'fathers of confusions, originators of schisms' and denounced Independents, 'who recognize neither the authority of the Church of Rome, nor that of the Anglican. Rebels not only to the Catholic truths, but also to those of the Heresies themselves'.²⁶

Quaker Missions to Italy

The only direct relationship that the English sectarian world had with Italy was the Quaker missions to the peninsula, with which most scholars of seventeenth-century English radicalism are familiar.²⁷ In 1657, a group of Quakers set out for the Levant, their goal being to reach Jerusalem. Two Irish members of this mission, John Luffe and John Perrot, separated from their companions and, after stopping off at Venice, arrived at Rome in June 1658 – perhaps intending to convert the Pope to Quakerism. Arrested and tried by the Inquisition, Perrot, having initially being held in the Carceri Nuove and then in the Inquisition prisons, was locked up in the madhouse of Santa Maria della Pietà (or Ospedale dei Pazerelli). His companion Luffe died, probably in November 1658, and almost certainly after what we would today call a 'hunger strike'. In April 1661, two other Quakers, Charles Bayly and Jane Stokes, who had come to Rome to meet Perrot, were arrested. But shortly afterwards, in June that year, all three were released, perhaps following informal English diplomatic intervention. Among the other Quakers who stayed in Italy during this period, mention must also be made of George Robinson, who stopped in Livorno on his way to Jerusalem in the winter of 1657; Samuel Fisher and John Stubbs, who reached Venice in April 1658 – where they were reported to the Inquisition – and then went on to Rome, where they remained undisturbed for several weeks; and Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, who, en route for Alexandria by sea, disembarked at Livorno towards the end of 1658. These two

²⁵ Bernardo Morando, *La Rosalinda ... Spiegata in dieci libri* (Piacenza, 1650): 'Ma fuori del grembo della Chiesa Romana dove alberga l'unità della Fede? Forse nella vostra Inghilterra, tutta divisa in Protestanti, Puritani, Presbiterani, Politici, Independenti, Egualisti e in tante altre Sette tra sé discordi?'

²⁶ Lupis, *La Marchesa d'Hunsleij*, p. 145: 'padri di confusioni, novellisti di scismi ... independenti, che non conoscono né la Chiesa Romana, né l'Anglicana nella loro ubbidienza. Ribelli non solo della verità Cattolica, che delle medeme Eresie'.

²⁷ K.L. Carroll, 'John Perrot early Quaker schismatic', *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, supplement no. 33 (1971).

women were subsequently arrested by the Holy Office in Malta when their ship called in there. Tried by the Inquisitor Girolamo Casanate for distributing Quaker propaganda, they were imprisoned for more than three and a half years, during which time they received a visit from their co-religionist Daniel Baker.²⁸ It is possible that other Quakers also stopped in Italy briefly during this period, remaining unobserved by the religious authorities and thus leaving no evidence of their presence.

The Quakers caught the imagination of the Italians who came in contact with them. Referring to Perrot and his companions, the governor of Livorno, Antonio Serristori, described them, in a letter of 26 August 1657 to Ferdinand Bardi the Secretary of War, as ‘people who speak very little and only about spiritual things’ and as ‘very much versed in Sacred Scripture, that they always carry with them in English’. At the same time, however, he emphasised that apart from that they were ‘ignorant, not even knowing how to speak Latin, other than a very little’, and not accepting ‘other books or studies but the Bible’.²⁹ He also pointed out that they addressed everyone with ‘thou’ and ‘thee’, and that they did not salute ‘anyone, even a Prince, saying that to salute men was an act of idolatry’.³⁰ Serristori also mentioned that Quakers arriving at Livorno did not look directly at anyone’s face and that women particularly did ‘great penances, generally condemning all vices’, being convinced that the Holy Spirit spoke ‘within them’.³¹ The governor’s letter concluded by observing that their apostolic attitude might convince some people of the validity of their opinions, thereby implicitly suggesting that it would be appropriate to get rid of them as soon as possible.³² The governor, however, seems to have worried unduly since there is no evidence of any Italian being converted to Quakerism thanks to the Quaker missionary effort in Italy (efforts which included the distribution of propaganda material in Latin and French, and the translation of a text by Isaac Penington into Italian).

²⁸ S. Villani (ed.), *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by Those Two Faithful Servants of God Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers. La vicenda di due quacchere prigioniere dell’inquisizione di Malta* (Pisa, 2003).

²⁹ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 2180 (Governatore), Antonio Serristori to Ferdinando Bardi (26 August 1657), printed in Stefano Villani, *Tremolanti e Papisti. Missioni quacchere nell’Italia del Seicento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996), pp. 38–9; ‘Son gente che parlano pochissimo, e solo di cose spirituali ... sono versatissimi della Scrittura Sacra, che portan sempre con loro in lingua inglese, nel resto sono ignoranti, non sapendo neanche parlar latino, se non pochissimo, e non ammettono altri libri, né altri studij che della bibbia.’

³⁰ ‘danno del tu a ognuno, e non salutano alcuno quando fussi anco un Principe, dicendo essere il saluto agl’huomini un principio d’Idolatria’

³¹ ‘non guardano in viso nessuno e particolarmente le donne fanno gran penitenze, riprendono generalmente tutti i vizii, e dicono parlare in loro lo Spirito Santo’

³² ‘insomma fanno da Apostoli, e se si trattenessino qui troppo non ci mancherebbe chi approvassi, e gustassi questa novità’

In the governor's statement, which was written after his first meeting with the Quakers, one finds the complete range of characteristics that would subsequently appear in all seventeenth-century descriptions of Quakers who travelled to Italy; though it is noteworthy that there is no allusion to the tremor of their bodies as such episodes clearly did not occur in Livorno. Thus Quakers were described as bigots ('bacchettoni') and greater emphasis was placed on their behaviour rather than their ideas (there was little effort to understand their religious views). Their claim to 'correct the mistakes of the World', to quote the Tuscan diplomatic representative at Rome in 1658, was considered as an extravagance, if not downright folly.³³ When Perrot and Luffe were arrested by the Inquisition everyone expected that they would be sent to the stake. Yet, following their examination by the Holy Office they avoided the death sentence. Instead, their examiners concluded that the most appropriate place for them was Rome's madhouse; 'their dogmas being the result of mere madness', as Cardinal Francesco Barberini informed the Inquisitor of Malta in 1659.³⁴

The history of Quaker missions to Italy is therefore the story of a missed opportunity. The Quakers, whose missionary activities in Protestant countries had some success, considered the Catholics as wicked idolaters and made no corresponding effort to adapt their preaching to a context substantially different to the English one (even – or perhaps especially – Perrot, who came from predominantly Catholic Ireland). On the other hand, the Catholics considered the Quakers' theological positions as the naïve fantasies of ignorant people which were unworthy of being taken seriously. In contemporary Italian documents when Quakers are mentioned the dominant theme is always bemusement at their eccentricities, which never turns into indignation at their ideas. Regarded as the frenzies of weak-minded people, Quaker beliefs were once again held up as an example of the dangerous consequences of separation from Rome.³⁵

Concluding Remarks

After the Restoration, Henry Neville lived for long periods of time in Italy. A friend of the Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo III as well as numerous Italian intellectuals, no one apparently ever objected to his Republican views. Evidently his Italian hosts thought those political doctrines pertained to the British Isles and were not exportable. It is also likely that Neville himself did not consider the Italians mature enough to govern themselves as free men. As with the Quakers, Neville's case clearly shows how the cultural distance between Italy and England

³³ 'correggere gli errori del mondo'

³⁴ 'essendo effetto di mera pazzia li lor dogmi'

³⁵ Inquisition Archives of Malta, Mdina, Sezione Processi Criminali, 70A, printed in S. Villani, *Tremolanti e Papisti. Missioni quacchere nell'Italia del Seicento* (Rome, 1996), pp. 201–24.

did not facilitate the transmission of radical ideas that sprung forth out of fertile British soil.³⁶

All this clearly raises the question of whether the terms ‘radical’ and ‘radicalism’ can be used in a seventeenth-century Italian context. It is known that many Italians who participated in the sixteenth-century Reformation characterised themselves as heretics to all the Churches. Critical and unquiet consciences, they were persecuted for the audacity of their thoughts by both Catholics and orthodox Protestants. Among them were many anti-Trinitarians, supporters of universal salvation, theorists of religious toleration, Latitudinarians and Mortalists, whose works circulated widely in Europe.³⁷

In the seventeenth century, however, all this concerned a bygone era. In July 1542, Pope Paul III, with the Constitution *Licet ab initio*, had founded the Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition to exercise the holy office of defending the Church from heresy. The repression that followed completely swept away in forty years any form of manifest and conscious heresy, forcing those who did not want to adapt into exile or Nicodemism, hiding their ideas behind a veil of outward obedience. In the years that followed, the Church took care to prevent any challenge to post-Tridentine social discipline. The burning of Giordano Bruno on 17 February 1600 showed the whole of Italy how those who openly challenged the Catholic orthodoxy were punished.

Around the 1650s, however, cracks were beginning to appear in the edifice of post-Tridentine Catholic orthodoxy in Italy. Positions of cultured libertinism emerged informed by the conceptual tools of heterodox Aristotelianism. These led to openly anticlerical and anti-religious outcomes and it was increasingly common, even among uneducated people, to openly discuss political and theological questions. These were important heterodox currents of thought that have recently been the focus of studies of particular interest – for example, Federico Barbierato’s fascinating book about the ‘paths of disbelief’ in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Venice.³⁸ Yet it is clear that, at least for the central years of the seventeenth century, the Italian religious and political landscape was, from the perspective of the circulation of radical ideas, markedly different from the English. So much so, that they are incomparable. For this reason the study of how English radicalism was perceived in Italy is of particular interest.

To conclude, it seems reasonable to accept the following points: the Italian diplomats present in London during the Civil Wars and Interregnum – the resident of Tuscany Amerigo Salvetti and, after his death, his son Giovanni Salvetti Antelminelli, together with the Genoese resident Francisco Bernardi, and the

³⁶ O. Nicastro, *Henry Neville e l’isola di Pines: con testo inglese e la traduzione italiana di The isle of Pines* (Pisa, 1988). Gaby Mahlberg, *Henry Neville and English Republican culture in the seventeenth century* (Manchester, 2010).

³⁷ D. Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento e altri scritti* (Turin, 1992), p. 486.

³⁸ F. Barbierato, *Politici e ateisti: percorsi della miscredenza a Venezia fra Sei e Settecento* (Milan, 2006).

Venetian and Papal representatives – were provided detailed information about events in England. This included the turbulent religious scene and radical sects, which were analysed from a strictly political viewpoint. Hence James Nayler was explicitly defined by Bernardi as a Quaker Masaniello.³⁹ The same interpretative system characterises the works of the Italian historians of the seventeenth century, all of whom had Royalist sympathies. Because their interest in English events was completely political, theological issues remain in the background of their works.

English radical sects are treated a little more extensively in travel reports and heresiographies, though these works deliberately emphasised their more outlandish aspects. Their opinions are taken to be so manifestly bizarre as to provoke astonishment rather than genuine interest, and very often they are only described in order to give an ‘exotic’ touch to the travel narratives. From a theological perspective, for Italians writing about religious debates in England, the sects represented more or less only the perverse effects of separation from Rome and of freedom of conscience.

It can therefore be assumed that the attitude of Italian intellectuals towards English radicalism in this period offers evidence of the inability of seventeenth-century Italian culture to fully engage with the reality of that world. As has already been noted, in seventeenth-century Italian historical works one can also find extremely accurate accounts of the Levellers’ political activity and their ideas. Yet the very fact that these reports were published without running the risk of being censored is in itself proof that they were perceived as extraneous, and not in any way dangerous.

Finally, I should point out that the concept of ‘radical’, both in the theological and political sphere, has a very different meaning for Italian culture in the late seventeenth century than it has for an English one. It can perhaps be said that, for Italian intellectuals of the period, the only ‘possible’ form of political radicalism was internal to the theorisation of the *Raison d'état* (*Ragion di Stato*), and was thus reduced to a sort of outdated Machiavellianism, while the only ‘possible’ religious radicalism was a libertinism with anticlerical shades. After Paolo Sarpi it was not until the eighteenth century that there was any debates on Jurisdictionalism that there was any Italian reflection of some theoretical value on the relationship between State and Church.⁴⁰

For an Italian culture that was already uneasy when it came to defining the Church of England – a Church theologically close to Calvinism but with an Episcopal structure – the sectarian world of seventeenth-century English radicalism was substantially incomprehensible. I would like to finish with a revealing anecdote: when an obscure Somascan father reported to the Venetian Holy Office

³⁹ Letter by Bernardi (London, 5 January 1657), printed in C. Prayer (ed.), *Oliviero Cromwell dalla battaglia di Worcester alla sua morte. Corrispondenza dai rappresentanti genovesi a Londra*, in *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, 16 (1882), p. 393.

⁴⁰ See A.C. Jemolo, *Stato e Chiesa negli scrittori politici italiani del Seicento e del Settecento* (Naples, 1971).

his encounter with the Quakers John Stubbs and Samuel Fisher – the latter being an Oxford graduate and one of the most interesting radical intellectuals of the seventeenth century – he said that they did not have ‘deep knowledge of matters of controversy’, and that ‘for this’ they seemed more ‘to be deceived than able to deceive others with doctrine’.⁴¹ This contemptuous judgement perhaps gives a measure of the enormous distance that separated Revolutionary England from Counter-Reformation Italy.

⁴¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Sant’Uffizio, busta 108, fols 1v–2r: ‘notitia profonda delle materie di controversia’, ‘più tosto ingannati, che valevoli di ingannar altri con la dottrina’; cf. Villani, *Tremolanti e Papisti*.



Chapter 8

A Radical Review of the Cambridge Platonists

Sarah Hutton

Introduction

In 1644, during the English Civil War, the Earl of Manchester set about purging the University of Cambridge of Royalist support.¹ His action was described by the future Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft, as the beheading of the university and its colleges. In the years that followed, the fellows of Sancroft's own college, Emmanuel, benefited significantly from the Parliamentary confidence it enjoyed. Seven of the ten college headships made vacant by Manchester's purge, and many other college posts, were filled from the Emmanuel fellowship. Among them, Thomas Hill was appointed Master of the college in 1644 in place of the deprived Richard Holdsworth. In 1645, he was intruded Master of Trinity. Anthony Tuckney, appointed to replace Hill at Emmanuel, was subsequently, in 1653, appointed Master of St John's. In 1649, William Dell was intruded Master of Gonville and Caius College. In 1650, John Sadler was appointed Master of Magdalene College in place of the deprived Edward Rainbow.² The Emmanuel fellows intruded into other colleges also included men of a rather different theological temper from Tuckney. Foremost among these was Benjamin Whichcote who was appointed Provost of King's College in 1651. Whichcote's Emmanuel associates included John Worthington who was appointed Master of Jesus College in 1650,³ and Ralph Cudworth who was appointed Master of

¹ J. Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution, 1625–1688* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 97.

² The relationship of John Sadler to the Cambridge Platonists has never been explored. He certainly shared millenarian views, and a deep commitment to religious toleration, which extended to the Jews. He supported the readmission of the Jews to England in 1656 and the construction of a synagogue in 1657. He was also active in the Hartlib circle.

³ Worthington had been installed as a fellow of Emmanuel in 1641 as a result of an appeal for Parliamentary intervention to overturn the vote against his election. See *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington*, (ed.) J. Crossley and R.C. Christie, *Chetham Society*, 13, 36, 114 (2 parts in 3 vols, Manchester, 1847–86), 1, pp. 12–17.

Clare College in 1645, moving on to become Master of Christ's College in 1650.⁴ Other fellows of Emmanuel College linked to Whichcote were John Smith, who became mathematics lecturer at Queens' College in 1644, and Nathaniel Ingelo, who had been a fellow of Emmanuel only briefly before moving to Queens'. A friend of John Worthington, Ingelo subsequently served as chaplain to Bulstrode Whitelocke, Cromwell's sometime ambassador to Sweden. Two Emmanuel fellows associated with Whichcote who had the distinction of *not* being intruded into other colleges, were Nathaniel Culverwell, who died in 1651, and Peter Sterry, who served successively as chaplain to Lord Brooke, the Council of State (1649) and Oliver Cromwell. The group of Emmanuel men linked to Whichcote have been called the 'Emmanuel Platonists' on account of the Christian Platonist stamp of their thinking.⁵ The designation now in use is the more inclusive term 'Cambridge Platonists', which embraces other like-minded figures at the university, most famous of whom was Henry More of Christ's College,⁶ where Ralph Cudworth was appointed Master in 1650.

The Cambridge Platonists are a loosely defined group, chiefly because their group identity has been conferred retrospectively.⁷ Although there is general consensus as to the core group (Whichcote, Cudworth, More, Sterry and Smith) there is disagreement about their number. Culverwell is sometimes excluded on the mistaken view that he was not a Platonist. Even Whichcote's Cambridge Platonism has been disavowed.⁸ Sadler and Ingelo are normally overlooked. There were certainly other members of the university in sympathy with them – for example, John

⁴ For a discussion of the Cambridge Platonists' role, see B. Carter, 'Politics, Theology and Cambridge Platonism: the Trinity and Ethical Community in the Thought of Ralph Cudworth' (unpublished PhD, Middlesex University, 2004), ch. II. 3.

⁵ J. Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1874).

⁶ More entered Christ's College in 1631, graduating BA in 1636 and MA in 1639. He was elected fellow of the college in 1641 in place of his erstwhile tutor Robert Gell. On More, see S. Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614–1687) Tercentenary Studies: With a Biography and Bibliography* (Dordrecht, 1990); R. Crocker, *Henry More, the Biography of a Cambridge Platonist* (The Hague, 2003).

⁷ For discussion of the membership of the group and an overview of their writings, see C.A. Patrides (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (Cambridge, 1969); G.R. Cragg (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (Oxford, 1968).

⁸ Notably by J. Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England. Richard Cumberland's 'De legibus naturae'* (Woodbridge, 1999). Parkin tries to make a separation between Culverwell and Whichcote on the one hand and the Cambridge Platonists on the other, by arguing, in my view implausibly, that Culverwell exhibits a 'naturalism' not found in the others, and that Whichcote was more of an Aristotelian than a Platonist – a judgement which, in my view, is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of early modern Christian Platonism, and the compatibility of Cambridge Platonism with the new science.

Sherman and Hezekiah Burton.⁹ There is also a question as to whether Cambridge Latitudinarians like Simon Patrick should be included in their number – after, as Gilbert Burnet affirms, the contemporary nickname ‘Latitudinarian’, applied to the figures now called Cambridge Platonists. The nearest contemporary account of the Cambridge Platonists occurs in Joseph Glanvill’s Baconian utopia ‘Bensalem’, where several of them figure as ‘Cupri-Cosmits’, under pseudonyms which are formed from scrambled versions of their names.¹⁰ Writing after the Restoration, Glanvill emphasises their latitudinarianism. In the 1640s and 1650s, however, they stand out by virtue of their repudiation of predestinarian Calvinism.

Perhaps the best summary of the ideals and theological position which they shared is Benjamin Whichcote’s defence of his position against the criticisms levelled by the intruded master of his own college, Anthony Tuckney.¹¹ Whichcote defends a tolerant Christianity emphasising God’s grace and love, and the freedom of man’s will. Whichcote’s theology is underpinned by a deep sense of the compatibility of philosophy and faith, which allowed him to see the good even in a pagan philosopher, like Plato. Tuckney worried about the heterodox implications of Whichcote’s position. From a modern perspective, his mildness and eirenic disposition appear to us now divorced from the political sphere, and anything but radical. However, moderation does not necessarily mean a compromise position. Within the context of their time, it was certainly not seen as such, for all the ‘sweet reasonableness’ of their conduct. As opponents of the stern Calvinism which dominated academic Puritanism at that time, the Cambridge Platonists form a separate group among Cambridge Puritans. And, as the roll-call of parliamentary intrusions in the university makes clear, they were from the beginning associated with the parliamentary cause.

The Cambridge Platonists rarely figure in histories of the English Revolution. They receive brief but somewhat contradictory mention in Christopher Hill’s work, where Cudworth is the only one associated with radicalism.¹² Instead,

⁹ J. Levine, ‘Latitudinarians, Neoplatonists, and the Ancient Wisdom’, in R. Kroll, R. Ashcraft and P. Zagorin (eds), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England, 1640–1700* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 85–101.

¹⁰ Glanvill published a version of ‘Bensalem’ in his *Essays* (1676). Part of the original MS (now held in Chicago University Library) was printed in J.I. Cope, ‘The Cupri-Cosmits: Glanvill on Latitudinarian Anti-Enthusiasm’, *HLQ*, 17 (1954): pp. 69–86. See Crocker, *Henry More*, pp. 80–81.

¹¹ ‘Eight Letters of Dr. Anthony Tuckney, and Dr. Benjamin Whichcote’, printed in Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* (London, 1753).

¹² Cudworth is mentioned in a footnote, where he is classified as a radical largely by association (with John Stoughton and Samuel Hartlib), and not in terms of his ideas (C. Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1965), p. 101 n. 4). Hill’s assessment of the Cambridge Platonists is contradictory. On the one hand he credits them with being at the vanguard of the new science, and with subscribing to heterodox beliefs. But he overlooks their links to others he sees as radical (in particular John Goodwin and Robert Gell). He also differentiates More from radicalism by calling him ‘respectable enough’

the Cambridge student most likely to feature in histories of this period is their Cambridge contemporary John Milton. Thanks largely to the efforts of Christopher Hill, Milton the political activist has been rescued from his posthumous fate, first as the orthodox genius and politically neutral stylist of the literary canon, and then as the target of the revisionary iconoclasm of F.R. Leavis. Once consigned to Ozymandias-like literary perdition by Leavis, Milton was recovered by Hill and installed at the centre of his *Century of Revolution*.¹³ The radical credentials of Hill's Milton are measured in terms of his republican political activism and his religious heterodoxy, as well as the political allegiances of the company he kept, and his following among the political dissidents of succeeding times. Hill's recovery of the radical Milton from the image that prevailed in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries involved a fundamental reassessment of the poet as a politically engaged republican. The term 'Cambridge Platonism' originates in roughly the same period when the respectable image of Milton was formed. And, as with Milton the moderate man of letters, the Cambridge Platonists were claimed by orthodox, liberal Anglicanism. This was largely as a result of the labours of John Tulloch who set the mould for treating them as primarily theological thinkers, unconcerned with worldly affairs – an interpretation which has survived to this day,¹⁴ and which was reinforced by a tendency, deriving from Coleridge, to emphasise the transcendental aspects of their Platonism. The result has been the widespread perception that the Cambridge Platonists were mild, mystical, moderate theologians, unconcerned with secular life and, at most, politically neutral.¹⁵ This image is overdue for the kind of review to which Milton has been subjected.

In this essay I aim to recover a more controversial and politically engaged image of Cambridge Platonism, and to make a case for their inclusion more centrally in the history of the English Revolution and its aftermath. In so doing, I aim to open the question of their possible radicalism, in the context of the interrogation of radicalism with which this volume is concerned. In considering whether, and, if so, in what respects they might be considered radical, I shall, for

(C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977), p. 493), and dismissing him as a mystic. Cudworth is the only Cambridge Platonist to be given an entry in the *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. R. Greaves and R. Zaller (3 vols, Brighton, 1982–84).

¹³ Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*.

¹⁴ Tulloch, *Rational Theology*. Cf. F. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: A Study* (London, 1926). For a discussion of this interpretation of the Cambridge Platonism, see Carter, 'Ralph Cudworth'.

¹⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that the mysticism of some sectarian leaders of the period has been taken as a sign of their radicalism, a double standard seems to apply to the Cambridge Platonists. When they are identified as mystics, the identification is used pejoratively. Jon Parkin, for example, writes of the 'esoteric pre-occupations' and 'mysticism and eclecticism' of Cudworth, More and Smith. He compares this unfavourably with what he sees as 'the common sense empirical intellectual tradition' that he associates with Whichcote (Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics*, pp. 77–8).

the purposes of this paper, confine myself largely to the criteria by which Milton has been reclassified as a radical. This, I freely admit, is somewhat problematic, not least because Christopher Hill's conception of radicalism is not immune from criticism.¹⁶ There are, of course, other ways of assessing Cambridge Platonist radicalism, depending on how radicalism is defined. An alternative route might be by applying the criteria by which John Locke has been associated with the political radicals of the 1680s – namely by way of their political connections (I shall return to the Locke connection). One of the difficulties in assessing the position of the Cambridge Platonists is the silence which has engulfed their early history and later fortune. This silence is both a symptom and a consequence of their political fortunes after the Restoration. In this essay I argue that there are aspects of Cambridge Platonism which deserve to be termed 'radical' in the same sense as Milton, even if one might want to set a limit to their radicalism in other respects. Whether or not the evidence I shall present is sufficient to re-classify them as radicals, the resulting picture will bring the Cambridge Platonists rather closer to John Milton than Milton scholars today are prepared to countenance.

Problematic Inheritance

Before proceeding, a word on the Cambridge Platonists' 'Platonism' is in order. The first point to make is that the designation 'Platonist' is misleading. While it is true that, after the manner of the early Fathers, they drew on Platonist sources in their writings, they were not a school of philosophers in the sense that they organised themselves as one, or in the sense that they all subscribed to a fixed set of doctrines. They certainly did not call themselves Platonists, never mind Cambridge Platonists – the designation itself was adopted in the nineteenth century. Nor were they Platonists in the modern sense of an exclusive adherence to the teachings of Plato. Rather, in the tradition of their Renaissance forebears, they interpreted Plato alongside Plotinus, and drew on other ancient philosophies including Stoicism and Greek atomism and Aristotelianism. While there is much about the label 'Platonist' that is entirely appropriate, a disadvantage of the term is that it encourages the assumption made by many that their philosophy was unworldly, even mystical, and out of touch with the realities of the time. Worse, Platonism is nowadays often mistakenly viewed as a sign of theological, if not political conservatism. Its take-up by the likes of Dean W.R. Inge, would seem

¹⁶ See, for example, J. Morrill, 'The Nature of Christopher Hill's Revolution', in J. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 1993), pp. 273–84. For a broader discussion, see 'Rethinking the English Revolution', Introduction by Lyndal Roper and Laura Gowing, articles contributed by Quentin Skinner, John Walter, Rachel Weil and Ann Hughes, *History Workshop Journal*, 61 (2006): pp. 153–204.

to confirm this view.¹⁷ Consequently, the Cambridge Platonists have come to be misunderstood as theologically and politically conservative.¹⁸

Modern interest in the Cambridge Platonists is patchy and often ambivalent. It is largely historians of religion and of philosophy who accord them any attention, though historians of science do take an interest.¹⁹ Although they were strenuous opponents of Thomas Hobbes, they have been largely ignored by the Hobbes industry – perhaps because of the reluctance of historians of English political thought to deal with religious thinkers. In philosophy, the Platonist label has resulted in the Cambridge Platonists being seen as representing a philosophical dead end – a judgement notoriously promoted by Ernst Cassirer.²⁰ The Cambridge Platonist contribution to modernity tends to be downplayed or overlooked: notwithstanding his role in propagating Cartesianism in England, Henry More commonly figures as a minor Cartesian and bumbling scientist,²¹ while his religious writings have been largely ignored. He is treated as a minor poet and poor philosopher.²² In the history of ethics, Cudworth has fared somewhat better, especially in the work of Passmore, Raphael, Schneewind and Darwall.²³ But Cudworth's philosophical reputation rests largely on his posthumous writings, ignoring his *magnum opus*, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678). Even where the modernity of the Cambridge Platonists is acknowledged, it is at the expense of their thought as a whole. The classic case is Koyré's study of More's conception of infinite space, in which he emphasises the importance of More's contribution on the subject, but only by excising it from its origins in More's Platonism.²⁴ In the 'story' of modern philosophy More and Cudworth appear backward-looking, on account of their humanistic respect for ancient philosophy, and (especially in More's case)

¹⁷ Whichcote's *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* were edited by Inge in 1930.

¹⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 310.

¹⁹ C. Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (London, 1975).

²⁰ E. Cassirer, *Die Platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* (Leipzig, 1932). Cassirer was unaware of the continuing influence of Cudworth, More and Whichcote in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

²¹ R. Hall, *Henry More: Magic, Religion and Experiment* (Oxford, 1990).

²² See, for example, Peter Loftson's Introduction to Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. P. Loftson (Dordrecht, 1982).

²³ J. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth, an Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1951); D.D. Raphael, *British Moralists, 1650–1800* (Oxford, 1969); J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1998); S. Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought', 1640–1740* (Cambridge, 1995).

²⁴ A. Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, MD, 1968), pp. 125–6. S. Hutton, 'Henry More, Ficino and Plotinus: the Continuity of Renaissance Platonism', in L. Simonutti (ed.), *Forme del Neoplatonismo: dall' eredità ficiniana ai platonici di Cambridge* (Florence, 2007), pp. 81–95.

adherence to beliefs that are considered alien to a modern mind-set (millenarianism, belief in witchcraft and ghosts). Whichcote, Smith, Sterry and Worthington are normally overlooked. Ernst Cassirer and Alexandre Koyré went so far as to claim that the Cambridge Platonists were without influence.²⁵

In theology, the Cambridge Platonists' erudition sets them apart from the kind of autodidactic element that characterises the grass-roots wing of radical theology of the Civil War period.²⁶ Their opposition to Calvinism, their liberal theology of grace and their emphasis on reason in religion have led to them being linked to the Laudians – though more usually with the moderates of Lord Falkland's circle at Great Tew, especially Jeremy Taylor and William Chillingworth.²⁷ If this classification separates them from ecclesiastical traditionalists, it connotes a 'middle of the road' position that can hardly be called 'radical'. Furthermore, their public denunciation of 'enthusiasts', Fifth Monarchists, Familists and Quakers (this is actually only true of Henry More), their submission to the restored Church of England at the Restoration and the fact More and Cudworth retained their college posts apparently unscathed, all set them apart from the radicals of 'the good old cause'. It is easy, on the basis of this kind of evidence, to conclude that the Cambridge Platonists were an isolated, unworldly group; traditionalists in theology and neutral in politics.

Counter-image

There are, however, other aspects of the Cambridge Platonists of which this conclusion takes no account. Firstly, they were not isolated figures. Their surviving letters show that they had a wide circle of connections with the world beyond Cambridge, both in England and throughout Europe. Indeed, their letters preserved in the correspondence of Samuel Hartlib and Christian Knorr von Rosenroth,²⁸ as well as letters between More and René Descartes,²⁹ More and Robert Boyle;³⁰

²⁵ This view is taken by Mark Goldie in his article on 'The Cambridge Platonists' for the *ODNB* – though he does distinguish between 'overt' and indirect influence: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/94274>. Likewise, Sarah Bendall, Christopher Brooke and Patrick Collinson, in their *A History of Emmanuel College, Cambridge* (Woodbridge, 2000), make the unfounded claim that they had no influence.

²⁶ N. Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989).

²⁷ Pocock, *Varieties of British Political Thought*, p. 310.

²⁸ SUL, HP, 18/1; Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelph. Extrav. 30.4.

²⁹ *Descartes. Correspondance avec Arnauld et Morus*, with a French translation by G. Lewis (Paris, 1953).

³⁰ *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, (eds) M. Hunter, A. Clericuzio and L.M. Principe (6 vols, London, 2001).

More and Philip van Limborch, Cudworth and van Limborch,³¹ and Cudworth and Sancroft,³² show that they were at the hub of intellectual networks extending far beyond Cambridge. The earliest letters relating to the Cambridge Platonists is the exchange between Benjamin Whichcote and Anthony Tuckney dating from 1651 (but not published until 1703).³³ The most extensive correspondence, both in time and in number, is More's. This comprises some 342 letters and spans a period of nearly forty years, 1648 to 1686. Besides those figures already named, More's correspondents include Anne Conway's brother John Finch, Joseph Glanvill, John Davies, Simon Patrick, William Penn, Edward Fowler, John Covell, Henry Hyrne, John Sharp, George Keith, Sir George Rawdon, John Norris, Edmund Elys, Henry Hallywell and Jeremy Taylor.³⁴ In addition to these, the large number of *scholia* which More added to his writings in his *Opera omnia* (1675–79) indicates a wide network, since they largely consist of responses to points which he had, evidently, received from readers – though he does not normally name those with whom he is debating, the exceptions being Christopher Sturm and Francis Glisson. The correspondents of John Worthington included his good friends Cudworth and More, and other associates of the Cambridge Platonists, such as Nathaniel Ingelo and Edward Fowler. Moreover, the earlier part of Worthington's correspondence links him – and by extension his Cambridge Platonist colleagues – with the pansophic circle of Samuel Hartlib, among whom his correspondents include Hartlib himself as well as John Dury, Theodore Haak and Seth Ward.³⁵ The letters contain news of people such as Whichcote, Jan Amos Comenius, William Petty, Simon Patrick and Adam Boreel.³⁶ Worthington also had links with Robert Boyle's sister, Lady Katherine Jones, Viscountess Ranelagh.

Secondly, the judgement that the Cambridge Platonists had no impact on intellectual developments after their day ignores, at the very least, the evidence from their publication record. In his lifetime More's writings sold widely. An admirer paid for his works to be translated into Latin, while his English writings were republished in the early eighteenth century.³⁷ Benjamin Whichcote's sermons

³¹ Amsterdam Universiteits Bibliotheek, MS III.D.17, Philip van Limborch, *Epistolae ad Anglos*.

³² Bodl., MS Tanner, 39, fol. 115; 44 fol. 115; 290, fol. 154.

³³ 'Eight Letters of Tuckney, and Whichcote', in Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, ed. Samuel Salter (London, 1753).

³⁴ For a full list, see Crocker, *Henry More*, appendix.

³⁵ For the Hartlib circle, see Webster, *Great Instauration*. The Cambridge Platonists occupy a marginal position in Webster's classic study.

³⁶ For example, letters for 26 June 1659, 10, 22 and 26 August 1661, 18 November 1664, 19 February 1669, 22 April 1669, in *Diary and Correspondence of Dr Worthington*, 1, pp. 135–40, 350–75, 2, pt i, pp. 143–9; pt ii, pp. 307–8, 1–17.

³⁷ Henry More's *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (London, 1662) was republished between 1712 and 1713. His *Theological Works* were printed in 1708.

were edited by Shaftesbury and published in 1698,³⁸ and other collections of writings were published in the eighteenth century.³⁹ Although Cudworth's *magnum opus* was never fully completed, the part he published in 1678 was reprinted by Thomas Birch in 1743,⁴⁰ translated into Latin by Johan Lorenz Mosheim in 1733 (reprinted 1773),⁴¹ and rendered into Italian by Luigi Benedetti in 1823.⁴² It was also abridged by Thomas Wise in 1706 (reprinted 1732).⁴³ Although Cudworth's ethical writings were published posthumously (1731),⁴⁴ and then only partially, they had an enduring influence. E.M. Austin recognised the Cambridge Platonists as founders of a school of English ethics.⁴⁵ Moreover, Robin Attfield has claimed that 'the only school of British Moralists uninfluenced by Cudworth seems to have been that of the Utilitarians'.⁴⁶ John Smith's *Select Discourses* (1660) was reprinted at Cambridge in 1673, at Edinburgh in 1756 and, in an abridged version, at London in 1820. Culverwell's *Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* (1652) was reprinted in 1654, 1659, 1661, 1669 and 1752. Contrary to the

³⁸ Benjamin Whichcote, *Select Sermons*, with a preface by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (London, 1698).

³⁹ Benjamin Whichcote, *Some Select Notions* (London, 1685); *The Works of the Learned Benjamin Whichcote* (4 vols, Aberdeen, 1751); *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, ed. John Jeffrey (London, 1703; enlarged edition by S. Salter, 1753); *Several Discourses*, ed. John Jeffrey (4 vols, London 1701–07). Whichcote's sermons were influential even before publication: in his funeral sermon for Whichcote, Thomas Tillotson makes the comment that Whichcote's Cambridge preaching prior to the Restoration 'contributed more to the forming of students ... to a sober sense of religion than any man in that age' (Whichcote, *Works*, 2, p. 154).

⁴⁰ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, (ed.) Thomas Birch (2 vols, London: J. Walthoe, 1743; reprinted 1820 and 1829).

⁴¹ Ralph Cudworth, *Radulphi Cudworthi ... systema intellectuale huius universi*, trans. J.L. Mosheim (Jena, 1733; reprinted Leiden, 1773).

⁴² Ralph Cudworth, *Sistema intellettuale del' universo*, trans. Luigi Benedetti (5 vols, Pavia, 1823–24). There was also an American edition (Andover, MA, 1837–8).

⁴³ Thomas Wise, *A Confutation of the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism being an Abridgement of or an Improvement of what Dr Cudworth Offered in his 'True Intellectual System'* (London, 1706; reprinted 1732).

⁴⁴ Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (London, 1731). A further three manuscripts on 'Liberty and Necessity' are in the British Library, of which only the shortest has been printed: *Of Freewill*, (ed.) John Allen (London, 1838) and, more recently, together with the modern edition of *A Treatise*, (ed.) S. Hutton (Cambridge, 1996).

⁴⁵ E.M. Austin, *The Ethics of the Cambridge Platonists* (Philadelphia, 1935), p. 70. Passmore includes a list of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century references to Cudworth in *Ralph Cudworth*, pp. 115–16.

⁴⁶ R. Attfield, 'Cudworth, Prior and Passmore', in D. Hedley and S. Hutton (eds), *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2008).

judgement of Koyré and Cassirer, the Cambridge Platonists also had an impact on later scientific theory: to name only a couple of instances, the botanist John Ray drew on Henry More, while Cudworth's theory of Plastic Nature influenced eighteenth-century physiological theory. The charge that the Cambridge Platonists were without influence does not withstand even basic analysis. Extra work has still to be done on their fortunes in the eighteenth century. I shall say a little more about the immediate take-up of their thought below. Suffice to say at this point that, in theology, they were the key figures among the group nicknamed as Latitudinarians,⁴⁷ whose importance in late seventeenth-century ecclesiastical history is unquestioned.

Traditionalism versus Modernity

As their eighteenth-century legacy implies, far from being backward-looking, the Cambridge Platonists were at the forefront of developments in contemporary thought in their time. They responded positively to the reformist views of Francis Bacon. They shared the pansophic vision of the Hartlib circle where religion and philosophy, in the words of John Worthington, united to discover 'truths that are most essential and fundamental to the happiness of mankind'.⁴⁸ More, Smith and Cudworth were among the first to take up the new philosophy of Descartes. More was one of the first to propose adding the study of Cartesianism to the university curriculum. He also played a part in popularising the new astronomy of Copernicus and Galileo through his philosophical poetry.⁴⁹ Both he and Cudworth were proposed as fellows of the Royal Society. John Worthington was at the forefront of intellectual developments of the interregnum: he places himself firmly within the Hartlib circle's aspiration for godly educational reform, inspired by the legacy of Francis Bacon. 'The true Instauration Magna', he tells Hartlib, is 'infinitely above the knowledge of external Nature or unheard curiosities'. Practitioners of the new learning will, he hopes:

engage in such discourses as tend to clear and confirm those truths that are most essential and fundamental to the happiness of mankind, such as tend to vindicate the attributes of God and solve the phenomena of Providence, and

⁴⁷ Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time*, (ed.) O. Airy (3 vols, Oxford, 1897–1902), 1, pp. 331–4.

⁴⁸ *Diary and Correspondence of Dr. Worthington*, 2, pt i, p. 89. Both groups received vital input from outsiders (Hartlib and Van Helmont). The main difference in the case of Lady Conway and her circle was their interest in Kabbalah as the vehicle of those truths.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Henry More's *Psychathanasia* and *The Philosopher's Devotion*, both printed in his *Philosophical Poems* (Cambridge, 1647). This also reprints his *Democritus Platonissans, or an Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds* (first published Cambridge, 1646).

rescue Christian religion from what hath hindered its growth and stained its native excellencies and done it so much disservice in the world.⁵⁰

Worthington had hoped that Henry More might supply this lack of a suitable natural philosophy.⁵¹ Without substantiating his claim, Christopher Hill himself acknowledges that ‘the Cambridge Platonists ... neatly illustrate the fusion of Puritanism, parliamentarianism and science’,⁵² while, in the view of Charles Webster, ‘The Platonists were one of the most important formative influences on English natural philosophy in the second half of the seventeenth century’.⁵³

Modernity and radicalism are, of course, not synonymous. But in the context of the time to espouse new ideas, particularly those which are associated with ‘revolution’ in science and philosophy, might reasonably be seen as radical. As far as we know, the Cambridge Platonists’ intellectual modernity did not translate into political radicalism.⁵⁴ Their connection with the Hartlib circle, however, links them to social visionaries of the Interregnum. Indeed, though no ideal commonwealths were proposed by them, their associate John Sadler authored *Olbia. The New Iland lately Discovered* (1660) and their admirer Joseph Glanvill penned ‘Bensalem’. Unlike Milton, they accepted women as the intellectual equals of men: the notable example is Anne Conway, whom More tutored in philosophy.⁵⁵ Cudworth’s daughter, Damaris, was later to become the intellectual intimate of John Locke.⁵⁶ Their tolerationist principles were at least as inclusive as Milton’s and extended to toleration of Jews: Whichcote, Sterry and Cudworth supported Cromwell’s endeavours to readmit Jews to England.⁵⁷

Radical Religion

For the period of the English Revolution, an important measure of radicalism is religious heterodoxy. In his presentation of Milton as a radical in religion, Christopher Hill singled out what he calls his ‘radical Arminianism’ and his anti-Trinitarianism. On both these counts, the Cambridge Platonists bear comparison

⁵⁰ *Diary and Correspondence of Dr. Worthington*, 2, pt i, p. 89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pt ii, p. 254.

⁵² Hill, *Intellectual Origins*, p. 312.

⁵³ Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 145.

⁵⁴ Yet there are examples of more explicitly political writing among their associates like John Sadler’s *Rights of the Kingdom* (London, 1649).

⁵⁵ S. Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher* (Cambridge, 2004); J. Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁵⁶ S. Hutton, ‘Between Platonism and Enlightenment: Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham’, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 1 (1993): pp. 29–54.

⁵⁷ D. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 205–9.

with Milton. Indeed Hill himself aligns them with Milton as radical Arminians, or what he chooses to call ‘Arminians of the left’ – that is to say a ‘third force’ who rejected both the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation and Laudian sacramentalism, to emphasise human free will as the basis of moral conduct.⁵⁸ Leaving aside Hill’s contentious explanation of the grass-roots origins of this type of Arminianism, his differentiation of Milton from the Cambridge Platonists in terms of their sources (the claim that Milton’s sources were radical sectaries, while theirs were not) is wholly unsustainable. The Cambridge Platonists were every bit as radical as Milton in their emphasis on free will, and Milton every bit as learned as they in his theology. Among indicators of religious radicalism, heterodox Trinitarianism and, especially, denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, are hugely important. Hill makes reference to Cudworth’s unorthodox account of the Trinity; he might have gone further and shown the importance of Cudworth’s Platonism for his account of the Trinity.⁵⁹ Cudworth, after all, devoted his entire *True Intellectual System of the Universe* to demonstrating a positive link between Platonism and Christian doctrine, including, especially, the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁰ No less a figure than John Locke (whose Trinitarian orthodoxy was put under scrutiny by Bishop Stillingfleet), noted in his ‘Adversaria theologica’ that Cudworth’s *True Intellectual System* was a source for ‘the Original of the Trinitarian doctrines, from whom they are derived ... by whom they were invented’. Cudworth’s *True Intellectual System* fuelled the Unitarian/Trinitarian controversy of the later seventeenth century.⁶¹ He himself made the claim that the Church of England accommodated Socinians within its ranks.⁶² Cudworth seems to have taken a relatively agnostic line on many matters of doctrine. He told the House of Commons in 1647, ‘I perswade my self, that no man shall ever be kept out of heaven, for not comprehending mysteries that were

⁵⁸ Hill, *Milton and English Revolution*, pp. 268–78.

⁵⁹ S. Hutton, ‘The Neoplatonic Roots of Arianism: Ralph Cudworth and Theophilus Gale’, in L. Szczucki (ed.), *Socinianism and its Role in the Culture of the XVIIth to XVIIIth Centuries* (Warsaw and Lodz, 1979), pp. 139–45.

⁶⁰ Book III of *A True Intellectual System* includes ‘The Platonick Christian’s Apology’, which defends the view that Plato and some of his followers subscribed to a form of Trinitarianism that came very close to Christian doctrine. See D. Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 60–63.

⁶¹ See J. Marshall, *John Locke, Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 389–95; D. Hedley, ‘Persons of Substance and the Cambridge Connections. Some Roots and Ramifications of the Trinitarian Controversy in Seventeenth-century England’, in M. Mulrow and J. Rohls (eds), *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden, 2005), pp. 225–40. For an informed corrective to Marshall, see V. Nuovo, ‘Locke’s Theology, 1694–1794’, in M.A. Stewart (ed.), *English Philosophy in the Age of Locke* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 183–215. Cudworth’s views on the Trinity were central to the Salem Controversy in 1834.

⁶² Amsterdam Universiteits Bibliotheek, MS M.21.c, Ralph Cudworth to Philip van Limborch (16 March 1675).

beyond the reach of his shallow understanding.⁶³ His tolerant attitude did not earn him friends, least of all among those of ‘shallow understanding’: in 1658 John Beale reported to Samuel Hartlib that ‘Dr Cudworth hath been affronted by many discouragements. Vulgar spirits are too narrow to understand him.’⁶⁴ After the Restoration, doubts about his orthodoxy were such that, according to Birch, it was put about by court wits that his attack on atheism was a covert defence of it.⁶⁵

In addition to the Arian drift in Cambridge Platonist views of the Trinity, we might also point to their espousal of deeply unorthodox doctrines such as the pre-existence of the soul (More), and universal salvation (Sterry). They also accorded human reason an important role in religion and downplayed the role of revelation. Reason, according to Whichcote, is that which makes man ‘capable of God’. ‘Reason discovers what is natural and receives what is supernatural.’⁶⁶ A major inspiration for their theology was the heterodox church father Origen. So strong was Henry More’s adherence to the teachings of Origen that he was dubbed the ‘English Origen’.⁶⁷ More’s attack on the sectaries (or ‘enthusiasts’ as he called them) in his *Enthusiasmus triumphatus* is well known. But, in assessing More’s position, we should be mindful of what polemics tell us about the vulnerability of attackers to the very charges they make. More’s letters to Anne Conway testify to his profound interest in all sorts of heterodoxies, including Behmenism, millenarianism and Kabbalism. In view of his own heterodoxy, his attacks on Hendrick Niclaes, David George, Thomas Vaughan and others should be seen less as the mark of a traditionally-minded ecclesiastic and more as a struggle to set a boundary between notions espoused by and ascribed to other unorthodox thinkers and his own beliefs. Thus More’s controversy with Vaughan is an example of a dispute where the common ground between the protagonists seems greater than their distance.⁶⁸

⁶³ Ralph Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons* (Cambridge, 1647), p. 14.

⁶⁴ SUL, HP, 52/59A, John Beale to Samuel Hartlib (15 May 1658).

⁶⁵ Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, (ed.) Birch, preface.

⁶⁶ Cragg (ed.), *Cambridge Platonists*, pp. 63, 424.

⁶⁷ The best account of More’s theology is by Crocker, in his *Henry More*. Joseph Glanvill, who subscribed to the doctrine of pre-existence of the soul, celebrates More’s Origenism in his unpublished utopian manuscript ‘Bensalem’ (Chicago University Library MS). His admiration is replicated in another unpublished manuscript, dated 1687 and addressed to Robert Southwell, with the title ‘A kinde tho’ vaine attempt in speaking out the Ineffable Doctor Harry More’ (Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica). See Robert Crocker’s introduction to Richard Ward, *The Life of Henry More*, ed. S. Hutton et al. (Dordrecht, 2000); R. Lewis, ‘Of “Origenian Platonisme”’: Joseph Glanvill on the Pre-existence of Souls’, *HLQ*, 69 (2006): pp. 297–300.

⁶⁸ On More and ‘enthusiasm’, see D. Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Henry More: Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (Leiden, 1997), and the literature therein cited.

Politics

As concerns politics, the extent to which the Cambridge Platonists had republican sympathies is hard to tell. Unlike Milton, none of them defended the regicide.⁶⁹ But the circles to which they were linked suggest a good deal of common ground with Parliamentarians and republicans. The interregnum record of their activities is limited, but the evidence certainly indicates active involvement with the Parliament and with Cromwell. We have already noted the fact that they were beneficiaries of the Earl of Manchester's purge of Royalists in 1644. Their co-operation suggests more than passive collaboration with the Parliamentary take-over of the university. From the mid-1640s onwards, the career of Ralph Cudworth took off and he rose rapidly to become Regius Professor of Hebrew. He was invited to preach to the House of Commons in 1647. Later he became adviser to Thurloe and Cromwell's government, advising on matters such as the readmission of the Jews and the statutes for the proposed college at Durham. He contributed a congratulatory poem to the collection *Oliva Pacis* (Cambridge, 1654) sent by the university to Oliver Cromwell, and a message of loyalty to his son, Richard Cromwell, following his father's death. He also considered dedicating a work to the younger Cromwell in 1659.⁷⁰ Peter Sterry too had Cromwell connections: after serving as chaplain to the Parliamentary leader, Lord Brooke, he became one of Cromwell's chaplains, in which capacity he exercised much influence.⁷¹ Is it just a coincidence, one would like to know, that More and Milton were fellows of the same College? Or that the patron who tried to save John Worthington at the Restoration was also the patron of John Milton – Lady Ranelagh?

The strength of the Cambridge Platonists' collaboration with the English Revolution is borne out by the trouble it caused them at the Restoration. Although he was inclined to regard them as 'conservative', Christopher Hill observed that people like More and Cudworth had reason to be worried lest their compliance with the republican regimes be an impediment in the 1660s.⁷² The downturn in the fortunes of the Cambridge Platonists at the Restoration can be accounted for in terms of guilt by association with the English Republic. It is also to be explained in terms of their theological stance. These factors are of course not unconnected. Of those who held senior posts at Cambridge, two (Worthington and Whichcote) were

⁶⁹ Support for the regicide is not, in the Hill canon of revolutionaries, the *sine qua non* of radicalism.

⁷⁰ D.A. Pailin, 'Ralph Cudworth', *ODNB*.

⁷¹ B. Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate', *Studies in Church History*, 21 (1984): p. 208.

⁷² C. Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1974), p. 265. The impact of the Restoration was as dramatic for incumbent college heads as the Earl of Manchester's purge had been. All but five of them were ejected, as were many fellows. See John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 7–14.

deprived of their college headships and two (More and Cudworth) were subjected to a concerted attempt to remove them, only retaining their posts after a struggle (and probably thanks to the patronage of the influential Finch-Conway clan). Neither felt secure in his post after 1660.⁷³ Their surviving colleagues, meanwhile, were forced into retirement at the Restoration: Benjamin Whichcote retired to his family base in the City of London – where he moved in the same circles that Locke was later to frequent. Peter Sterry lived out his religious illuminism in retirement at East Sheen.⁷⁴ John Worthington never found a post that suited his scholarly bent. His attempts to find an alternative position came to nothing, and he was saved from destitution only by the intervention of his friend Henry More, who conferred on him his living at Ingoldsby near Grantham.

The two ‘survivors’ at Cambridge, Cudworth and More, were pilloried as ‘gentlemen of wide swallow’ for their tolerance of non-conformity, and accused of heresy – ‘I am rail’d and blustered against for an Heretick’, More told Anne Conway when reporting the hostility he endured.⁷⁵ Ralph Cudworth was deemed to be too sympathetic to the Nonconformists by the Church establishment,⁷⁶ and he appears to have survived the Restoration by keeping his head down, but not at the price of acquiescence. Although he was accused of being a time-server by his High Church enemies, he was principled in his management of his college, resisting attempts to circumvent college statutes by royal mandate. The delay in publishing his *True Intellectual System* may well have been the result of prudence on his part, especially in view of its Platonising account of the Trinity. Henry More’s theology was not well received by Restoration Anglicans. Despite the fact that he managed to retain his fellowship at Christ’s College, the whiff of heterodoxy clung to his name. To coincide with the Restoration he published his major work of theology: *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*.⁷⁷ Here, among

⁷³ D.W. Dockrill and J.M. Lee, ‘Reflections of an Episode in Cambridge Latitudinarianism: Henry More’s Epistle Dedicatory to Gilbert Sheldon of his *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*’, *Prudentia*, supplement (1976): pp. 207–23.

⁷⁴ *Peter Sterry: Selected Writings*, (ed.) N. Matar (Kansas, 1995).

⁷⁵ M. Nicolson and S. Hutton (eds), *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends: 1642–1684* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 220–21. The classic study is M. Nicolson, ‘Christ’s College and the Latitude Men’, *Modern Philology*, 29 (1929–30): pp. 39–53. The vicious hostility of the campaign against Cudworth, More and their Cambridge allies is toned down in the historiography, where it is covered as part of the history of Latitudinarianism. For a less varnished account, see Crocker, *Henry More*, ch. 6.

⁷⁶ Gilbert Burnet, *A Supplement to Burnet’s History of my Own Time*, (ed.) H.C. Foxcroft (Oxford, 1902), p. 464.

⁷⁷ Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660). This work tends to be ignored today, but was widely read in More’s lifetime. It proved to be his most popular publication, which ‘ruled the booksellers in London’ until his death in 1679. Although More claimed that he wrote *An Explanation* as an act of pious gratitude for his recovery from dire illness (*Mystery of Godliness*, preface, p. viii), the timing of its

other things, he defended episcopacy and distanced himself from the sectarian excesses of the revolutionary period. But the book is not a trimmer's charter. His defence of episcopacy was not calculated to please High Church traditionalists, since he rejected its *de jure* claims, basing his defence on the rationality of the institution.⁷⁸ Furthermore, his book constituted an important bid for religious peace by making a bold plea for religious toleration on the grounds that religion is a matter of individual conscience. In Book X, More defends freedom of worship and speech in terms of rights:

It is clear ... liberty of religion is the common and natural right of all nations and persons, that is to say, that they have a power ... to examine what is the best way to serve him [God], and not to be tied up to that religion [which] is first proposed to them. Indeed they have a right to suspect, especially if they do not like it, that there is some better, and therefore that they may confer with those of other religions, send for them out of one nation into another, entertain them diligently, and, if they are convinced, openly profess it. Or if they come of their own accord, they are to be entertained with the same security that an agent of state is, and may freely converse with them of the nation that have a mind to hear them. For this is a piece of their right of liberty to speak as well as others to hear.⁷⁹

More's book bears the stamp of Christian beliefs and spirituality which are associated more with interregnum piety than with the new Anglican order. He does not disguise his own rational, latitudinarian theology, or retract his subscription to heterodox beliefs such as the pre-existence of the soul.⁸⁰ On the contrary, he reaffirmed his position with a courageous, if diplomatic, *Apology*, issued in 1664. In spite of his declared opposition to sectarian 'enthusiasts' and his defence of episcopacy, More's theology did not meet with approval in the new Anglican establishment. There were mutterings against him in Episcopal circles – in 1669, for example, Edmund Elys reported to More that Seth Ward, Bishop of Exeter, disapproved of More's theology. Four years earlier, Francis Beaumont had attacked *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* because it 'swarm'd with dangerous errors', and it 'would open the door to Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, Latitudinarians' and other 'sincere and hearty enemies to our Church-government, or proud despisers of it'.⁸¹ Without referring to More by name, Samuel

publication could not have been better from the point of view of establishing his theological credentials at a moment of political change and ecclesiastical retrenchment.

⁷⁸ See Crocker, *Henry More*, chs. 6 and 7.

⁷⁹ More, *An Explanation*, in *Cambridge Platonist Spirituality*, ed. C. Taliaferro and A. Topley (New York and Mahwah, NJ, 2004), p. 174.

⁸⁰ See Crocker, *Henry More*, chs. 7 and 8.

⁸¹ Francis Beaumont, *Observations upon Dr More's Apologie* (London, 1665), pp. 4, 162.

Parker, censor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, attacked More's Origenism and Platonism in his *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophy* (1666) and *An Account of the Nature and Extent of the Divine Dominion and Goodnesse* (1666). The Anglican establishment had good reason to be concerned because *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* was only one of a group of Origenist texts to be published at this time. The others were William Spencer's edition of *Contra Celsus* (1658), the anonymous *A Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen* (1661, attributed to George Rust), and Joseph Glanvill's *Lux orientalis* (1662). In the same year, More nailed his Origenist colours to the mast by including a strong defence of Origen as 'the Miracle of the Christian World' in the 'Preface General' to his *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*.⁸² Altogether, these suggested the alarming prospect that a revival of the heterodox, Ante-Nicene father Origen was being spearheaded by Henry More. This explains why, in 1668, More had trouble obtaining approval to publish his *Divine Dialogues*: the first volume was held up until he agreed to treat the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls as merely a hypothesis. The unrepentant More reaffirmed his subscription to Origen by publishing an annotated edition of Glanvill's *Lux orientalis* and *Letter of Resolution Concerning Origen* in 1682 under the title *Two Choice and Useful Treatises*. As far as the Anglican establishment was concerned, where heterodoxy was the issue, the theorists of heterodoxy (learned divines like Cudworth and More) were arguably more dangerous than the self-taught inspiration of unlearned radical prophets – certainly in the eyes of their detractors.

Silence and Self-image

If, as I have been arguing, it was the case that Cambridge Platonists were deeply coloured by the political events of their time it is fair to ask why they were not better advocates for their position, and why their heterodoxy and political engagement is so singularly lacking from their reputation. Part of the answer is the truncated nature of their published output. Although they are known through their published writings these constitute an uneven record of their achievement. Only two of them published much: Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. But one of these never finished his *magnum opus*: Cudworth's dauntingly entitled *True Intellectual System of the Universe* which was published in the year he died (1678), is only the first of four projected volumes. Furthermore, Cudworth is most famous today for a book published half a century after his death, his *Treatise Concerning the Eternal and Immutable Morality* (1731). In three cases (Smith, Culverwell and Anne Conway) their books were published posthumously, as was Sterry's main work, *A Discourse on the freedom of the will*. Two of these (Conway's and Sterry's) are

⁸² Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (London, 1662), preface, p. xxi. On More's Origenism, see D. Dockrill, 'The Fathers and the Theology of the Cambridge Platonists', *Studia Patristica*, 18 (1982): pp. 427–39.

incomplete, and one (Conway's) appeared anonymously.⁸³ Two others (Whichcote and Worthington) never published anything philosophical, because they were ousted from their university positions at the Restoration.

Another reason for the moderate image of the Cambridge Platonists is the success of their own efforts at respectable self-presentation after the Restoration, as a result of which they have come to be regarded as mild, ivory-tower intellectuals. The apologetic prefaces Henry More wrote for the various editions of his writings are instructive. In his *Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, he makes explicit his admiration for Origen as a 'miracle of the Christian world', but allows that pre-existence of the soul be treated as a hypothesis and not as a doctrine of the Church. More's post-Restoration attacks on other denominations are directed against Roman Catholicism on the one hand and Familists and Fifth Monarchists on the other – a strategy for signalling his acceptance of the new church order. Significantly, his attack on Fifth Monarchists occurs in his writings on biblical prophecy, an area where he might be charged with occupying the same ground as sectarians. The peaceable, learned image projected by More in his *Opera omnia* is encapsulated by William Faithorne's portrait commissioned for inclusion in the work. This presents him as a melancholic scholar resting under a tree in front of a pastoral backdrop. More's changing self-image was an important exercise in self-preservation by projecting an image of learned harmlessness. The success of this self-image is the reputation for mildness, moderation and mysticism which has obscured the view of Cambridge Platonism in succeeding generations. The image is one successfully wrought by More who was, after all, one of those who retained a position from which he could publish. Others, less fortunate, were simply silenced by their disempowerment; most vividly epitomised in the fate of John Worthington.

John Worthington

An academic star of the Interregnum, appointed Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1650 and then vice-chancellor of the university (1657–58), Worthington was ejected from Cambridge at the Restoration. One of the most erudite and cultured of Benjamin Whichcote's Emmanuel College associates, he is usually treated

⁸³ Nathaniel Culverwell's *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* was posthumously published in 1654. Sterry's *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will* (London, 1675) was probably compiled by someone from his papers. Many of Sterry's MSS, now held at Emmanuel College, remain unpublished to this day. A manuscript of Anne Conway's treatise was found among her effects after she died and first published in Latin with the title *Principia Philosophiae Antiquissimae & recentissimae de Deo, Christo & Creatura, id est de Spiritu & materia in genere*, printed in *Opuscula philosophica* (Amsterdam, 1690), and translated as *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, concerning God, Christ, and the Creature* (London, 1692).

as peripheral to Cambridge Platonism, largely because there is little mention of Platonism in what he published – his major achievement being an edition of *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly Learned Joseph Mede* (London, 1665).⁸⁴ Worthington's *Diary and Correspondence* testify to his immense learning. The letters are also a valuable resource for the history of reading and book publication. Though his reputation was as a scholar, Worthington's correspondence takes us to the very heart of the intellectual world which the Cambridge Platonists inhabited. He shared Cudworth's and More's high valuation of both Platonism and Pythagoreanism, which he regarded as more godly than Judaism itself on account of their 'more inward apprehension and hearty relish of what was virtuous and divine'. As he explains:

their conceptions were more generous, and more expressive of what is worthy and perfective of the soul. Whereas there is a great silence in the Jew's writings about what is practical, and refers to a life exemplary in goodness.⁸⁵

He also shared with Cudworth and More the ideals of Samuel Hartlib's universal reformation. Worthington was linked to that remarkable Interregnum activist, Lady Katherine Ranelagh, sister of Robert Boyle and friend of John Milton. At the Restoration he was engaged upon his edition of the millenarian bible-scholar, Joseph Mede, doyen of so many of the sectarian millenarians.⁸⁶ Mede was also held in highest esteem by More and others, and Worthington seems to have packaged his edition of Mede for consumption by the restored Anglican Church.⁸⁷

Worthington's *Diary and Correspondence* records important biographical events: his marriage to Mary Whichcote (niece of Benjamin Whichcote); his dignified departure from Jesus College; his journey north in the expectation of finding suitable employment; his daughter's birth and wife's death.⁸⁸ It also

⁸⁴ Worthington also edited John Smith's *Select Discourses* (London, 1660). Had circumstances been different he may, of course, like Cudworth and More, have published books of his own. At a later date his son collected and edited his sermons: *Select Discourses* (London, 1725).

⁸⁵ *Diary and Correspondence of Dr Worthington*, 2, pt i, p. 112. This passage has particular resonance in view of More's interest in Kabbalism, and his neo-Pythagorean construction of a Christian Kabbalah, in his *Conjectura Cabbalistica* (1653).

⁸⁶ On Mede, see J. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth. Joseph Mede (1586–1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht, 2006); S. Hutton, 'More, Newton and the Language of Biblical Prophecy', in J.E. Force and R.H. Popkin (eds), *The Books of Scripture and Nature* (Dordrecht, 1994), pp. 39–54.

⁸⁷ S. Hutton, 'The Appropriation of Joseph Mede: Millenarianism in the 1640's', in J.E. Force and R.H. Popkin (eds), *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture* (Dordrecht, 2001), pp. 1–14.

⁸⁸ *Diary and Correspondence of Dr Worthington*, 1, pp. 88, 89, 204, 2, pt. i, pp. 209, 221, 228, 234–5.

registers the impact on intellectual life of the uncertainties of political change in the 1650s and 1660s. One of the most important insights that Worthington's correspondence provides about the context in which the Cambridge Platonists lived and wrote is that ideas are not divorced from their political and economic context. In view of the Cambridge Platonists' reputation for being unworldly mystics, this is a point that has a special resonance. For Worthington's letters help us to see the impact of political change on English intellectual life in general and their position in particular. Deprivation from his position at Cambridge was a major personal crisis for Worthington. Cut loose from his academic moorings, he found himself in middle age without the means or resources to continue the scholarly career for which he had been educated, and to which he was accustomed. The self-same letters which record his increasingly desperate bids to make a new beginning without sacrificing his scholarly interests give us a window into the very structure of intellectual life; a structure normally taken for granted, but which is here laid bare by crisis.

Worthington's search for a livelihood sufficient to support his wife and young family, for new patronage, for books to enable him carry on with his scholarly labours, and even for news of new publications, are an indirect reminder of how much the academic life provided, and what those secure in their college posts could take for granted. In the end it was his friend Henry More who came to his (material) rescue by installing him in his own living in Ingoldsby, Lincolnshire. But Worthington's material gain was also his loss: one of the most poignant letters in his correspondence was written after the death of his wife, Mary. In it he conveys a vivid image of the scholar bereft of domestic support, without local contacts to supply his domestic needs. It is a poignant image of a man, and a scholar, at a complete loss as to how to look after his baby son and toddler daughter.⁸⁹ We can only speculate what Worthington might have achieved had his career not been so fatally interrupted. Our modern sense of his affiliation to the Cambridge Platonists would certainly have been stronger. Irrespective of that, his impact on radical theology has, arguably, been greater than any of the others through his edition of Joseph Mede who is a source of inspiration to fuel Christian fundamentalism to this day.⁹⁰ The disrupted career of John Worthington may be viewed as a negative measure of what Cambridge Platonism might have been in different political circumstances.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, pt. ii, pp. 253–7, 290–97, 274. By comparison, Worthington's friend Benjamin Whichcote, who had private means, fared somewhat better when he was ejected from his post as Provost of King's College, Cambridge.

⁹⁰ Jue, *Heaven upon Earth*, ch. 11; R. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden, 1992).

Legacy

While the Cambridge legacy within the Anglican tradition must not be forgotten, neither should the more heterodox and politically radical aspect to their legacy outside it.⁹¹ One strand of the heterodoxies deriving from their theology could almost be an appendix to Thomas Edwards' catalogue of erroneous beliefs published as *Gangraena*. Cambridge Platonists (More and Sterry) and their followers (Daniel Whitby and Anne Conway) also figure prominently in D.P. Walker's *The Decline of Hell*.⁹² Mention has already been made of Cudworth's involvement with controversies surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity. Among the immediate followers of the Cambridge Platonists, Henry More's most famous pupil, Lady Anne Conway, espoused deeply heterodox views. Her correspondence with More shows her deep interest in radical religion – Quakerism, Familism, Behmenism. A topic which dominates Anne Conway's later correspondence and spills over into the printed sources is George Keith's extremely heterodox, if not heretical, theory that the soul of Christ is extended throughout the universe.⁹³ Besides More, prominent among the members of Lady Conway's circle at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire were the colourful and heterodox Francis Mercury van Helmont, the Quaker leader (and schismatic) George Keith and (at a distance) the Christian Kabbalist, Knorr von Rosenroth who was then working on his *Kabbala Denudata* (published Sulzbach and Frankfurt, 1677–84).⁹⁴ Anne Conway's posthumously published treatise bears the imprint of her dialogues with heterodoxy. In her *Principia Philosophiae Antiquissimae & recentissimae* (Amsterdam, 1690), she denies that body and soul are distinct entities, rewrites the doctrine of the Trinity and proposes universal salvation achieved by a form of radical perfectionism. Even without its Keith dimension, her Quakerism was a bridge too far for More, though he shared her other interests. Indeed, it was he who set her in the heterodox direction she took.⁹⁵ She was subsequently taken up by another radical group in the late seventeenth century, the Philadelphians.⁹⁶

Finally, the political afterlife of Cambridge Platonism, where it can be traced, is on the side of radical Whigs and republicans. Whichcote was linked to the same

⁹¹ Their followers within the Church of England, particularly Tillotson and Tenison, were considered dangerously heterodox by their own church.

⁹² D.P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell. Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (London, 1964).

⁹³ There is no space here to go into all the implications of this debate, which are also registered in More's *Opera omnia*, particularly in the *scholia* he added to his *Opera philosophica*. For a fuller discussion, see S. Hutton, *Anne Conway*.

⁹⁴ On this group and Anne Conway's interest in Kabbalism, see A. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614–1698)* (Leiden, 1998).

⁹⁵ Hutton, *Anne Conway*, p. 63.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 228–30.

circles as Locke, and his sermons were edited by Shaftesbury. A century later, at the time of the American and French Revolutions, their ideas were taken up by the so-called rational dissenters. The Unitarian leader Theophilus Lindsey claimed Whichcote as a forefather of Unitarianism. Cudworth, too, found an admirer in Shaftesbury, and also a following among the dissenting radicals. In his *An Historical View of the State of the Protestant Dissenters in England* (1814), Joshua Toulmin places Cudworth at the centre of debates surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity. Cudworth was also a major authority for Richard Price, defender of both the American and French Revolutions, whose *Review of the Present State of Morals* (1758) was heavily indebted to Cudworth's ethical philosophy.

Conclusion

In presenting a case for a radical review of Cambridge Platonism, I make no claims to comprehensive coverage or methodological perfection. But, when they are measured by the same criteria by which their contemporary John Milton has been reassessed, it is hard to sustain the view that the Cambridge Platonists were other-worldly mystics, detached from all political engagement, who transcended the divisions of their time and faded out with the dawn of the eighteenth century. Their close ties to the Commonwealth, the origins of so much of their thinking in the religious and intellectual ferment of the 1640s and 1650s, their uneasy relationship with both the so-called radicals of that period and the restored Anglican regime, all show that they belong to the political history of the period, every bit as much as they have a place in the history of seventeenth-century science, philosophy and religion. If novelty in philosophical thinking and heterodoxy in theology are criteria for radicalism, then they have just claims for attention in any revised history of English radicalism. And their fortunes fluctuated in the same way as that of their radical contemporaries. Their world too was turned upside down. Born in the crisis of the 1640s and blighted by the impact of the Restoration, Cambridge Platonism was, arguably – albeit briefly – the finest achievement of mid-seventeenth-century Protestant intellectual culture. Its truncated legacy was sustained visibly by Cudworth and More; less visibly by Benjamin Whichcote, through whom it contributed to the radicalism of the next generation.

Chapter 9

Radical Revelation? Apocalyptic Ideas in Late Seventeenth-Century England*

Warren Johnston

It is difficult for the historian of the early modern period to not think of radicalism at the mention of apocalyptic thought. Perhaps the first thing that springs to mind is the German town of Münster and John of Leyden's millenarian Anabaptist experiment there in the mid-1530s, one of the most radical social and political events of the early Reformation.¹ While there was no similar achievement of militant millenarianism in England in the sixteenth century,² the apocalyptic interpretations of Thomas Brightman and Joseph Mede, though not necessarily radical in themselves, laid the groundwork for millenarian expectations in the 1640s and 1650s. As historians such as Paul Christianson, William Lamont, Bernard Capp, and Christopher Hill, among others, have shown, these apocalyptic

* I would like to thank Ariel Hessayon and Mark Goldie for their careful reading and comments on this essay. Their suggestions for revision have been incorporated into the final version. Audiences at the 'Rediscovering Radicalism' conference at Goldsmiths, University of London in June 2006, and at the Midwest Conference on British Studies at Wright State University in September 2007, provided helpful responses to preliminary papers on this topic. All seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century sources were published in London unless otherwise noted.

¹ For an account and analysis of the events in Münster in 1534–35, see: J. Horsch, 'The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists of Muenster', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 9 (1935): pp. 92–103, 129–43; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957), pp. 283–306; R. Po-chia Hsia, 'Münster and the Anabaptists', in R. Po-chia Hsia (ed.), *The German People and the German Reformation* (Ithaca, 1988), pp. 51–70; J. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), pp. 123–38; A. Arthur, *The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster* (New York, 1999).

² The only event in sixteenth-century England that bears any similarities to the enthusiastic fervour and activism found in Münster was William Hacket's conspiracy to overthrow episcopacy and the queen in the early 1590s. However, Hacket's movement did not attain anything close to the initial 'success' the events in Münster had in the 1530s. For a discussion of Hacket's movement, see A. Walsham, "'Frantick Hacket": Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement', *HJ*, 41 (1998): pp. 27–66; A. Walsham, 'Hacket, William', *ODNB*. I thank Ariel Hessayon for drawing my attention to Hacket's conspiracy.

convictions would be used to justify and instigate political militancy during the Civil Wars and Interregnum.³ Even after the restoration of monarchy in 1660, radical millenarianism did not simply disappear, as Thomas Venner's ill-fated Fifth-Monarchist uprising in London in January 1661 demonstrated. Venner's speculations, based on the expiration of the 1,290 prophetic days of Daniel (12:11) and the resurrection of the two witnesses after their three and a half years of lying dead predicted in Revelation (11:7–11), led to his efforts to initiate a millennial kingdom. For this rebellion against the newly restored government of Charles II, Venner and a group of his followers were executed in front of their meeting-house in Coleman Street.⁴ Such radical efforts lived on in seventeenth-century English consciousness, long after their ability to pose any real threat to existing civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

This essay takes us three decades beyond these events from the early days of the restored Stuart monarchy, exploring the nature of apocalyptic thought in England in the last years of the seventeenth century. In doing so, it demonstrates a number of things. First, that all of the elements of apocalyptic thought of the early and mid seventeenth century were still present, including concern with dating and attaching prophetic time periods to historical events and eras, the belief in imminent millenarian fulfilment, and finding apocalyptic significance in contemporary political and religious circumstances. There was also still a wide array of literature and authors concerned with advancing apocalyptic beliefs and applying them to contemporary political and religious conditions in the 1690s, demonstrating that this thought had developed within the Protestant mainstream of more moderate commentary on Church and State. Finally, despite this moderation, it is apparent that disagreement over existing ecclesiastical policies continued, and even that embers from the fire of radical apocalyptic ideas of the past persisted into the last decade of the seventeenth century, though – as we shall see – the menace of enthusiasm and sedition was blunted by time and circumstance.

In all of this, the essay argues against common historiographical perceptions, instead contending that apocalyptic thought remained pertinent beyond the mid seventeenth-century crises and that it was not solely a medium to articulate political

³ See, for example, W. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603–1660* (London, 1969); C. Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971); B. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972); P. Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto, 1978).

⁴ *A Door of Hope: Or, A Call and Declaration for the Gathering Together of the First Fruits unto the Standard of Our Lord Jesus* (n.p., [1660]), pp. 12–13, 14, 16. See also C. Burrage, 'The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections', *EHR*, 25 (1910): pp. 722–47; R. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 49–57; Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp. 199–200; P.G. Rogers, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1966), pp. 110–20; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series 1660–61*, pp. 470–71, 475, 476.

and religious revolt. So, the conditions in the last decade of the seventeenth century continued to inspire Anglican and dissenting apocalyptic writers, and provided an anchor for prophetic fulfilment that satisfied – at least to some extent – representatives of both groups.

For those accustomed to hearing that apocalyptic ideas and applications disappeared after 1660, the number and variety of such tracts published in the 1690s might be surprising. Evidence of the persistence and extent of late seventeenth-century Protestant apocalypticism can initially be found in the momentous developments that ushered in the decade: the ‘deliverance’ of England (to use the common contemporary appraisal) from James II and his Catholic beliefs, his replacement on the throne by William and Mary, and the Revolution in English government that followed.

Apocalyptic literature supporting the transformation of political circumstances in 1688 began to appear in the autumn of that year and continued in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution that followed.⁵ Anglican and nonconforming authors joined together to extol the prophetic significance of those events. In 1691, the Congregational minister Thomas Beverley reminded Parliament of the recent defeat of popery in Britain and the ‘stupendous’ Revolution in England, followed up by William’s subsequent victories in Ireland. Four years on, Beverley would note Queen Mary’s important role in these achievements and characterise her death as a rebuke to the nation for not properly building on their successes, with the consolation, however, that Christ’s kingdom was not ‘far off’.⁶ John Butler, a Church of England rector to the parish of Wallington in Hertfordshire, saw the events of the late 1680s as an assurance that the millenarian kingdom would be ushered in imminently by the English monarchy, and Walter Garrett, vicar of Titchfield, Hampshire, dedicated to William and Mary his work demonstrating the place of the Church of England in the fulfilment of Revelation’s prophecies.⁷ The Whig author John Tutchin celebrated William and Mary’s new reign as a defeat of ‘Tyrant Monsters’ and the beginning of a ‘Golden Age’. Similarly, the dissenting

⁵ For a complete analysis of the apocalyptic ideas surrounding the Revolution, see W. Johnston, ‘Revelation and the Revolution of 1688–1689’, *HJ*, 48 (2005): pp. 351–89.

⁶ Thomas Beverley, *To the High Court of Parliament* (n.p., 1690), brs.; Thomas Beverley, *A Solemn Perswasion to Most Earnest Prayer for the Revival of the Work of God* (1695), pp. 16, 21. Thomas Beverley’s expansive apocalyptic oeuvre from the 1680s and 1690s is discussed in detail in W. Johnston, ‘Thomas Beverley and the “Late Great Revolution”’: English Apocalyptic Expectation in the Late Seventeenth Century’, in A. Hessayon and N. Keene (eds), *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 158–75.

⁷ John Butler, *Bellua Marina: of the Monstrous Beast which Arose Out of the Sea* (1690), pp. 414–15; Walter Garrett, *An Essay upon the Fourth and Fifth Chapters of the Revelation* (1690).

author of the *Enquiry into the Vision of the Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses* (1692) found the Revolution and the new monarchs together initiating both the resurrection of the witnesses (Revelation 11:12) and the pouring of the fifth vial on the seat of the beast (Revelation 16:10) – accomplishments that would lead to the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the founding of the New Jerusalem in England.⁸

Comment upon the Revolution continued to influence apocalyptic thinking to a variety of purposes throughout the decade. Thomas Ward and Valentine Evans, the self-proclaimed ‘two witnesses’ for John Mason’s apocalyptic movement in Buckinghamshire in the early 1690s, cited the Revolution as a sign of God’s favour towards England. Likewise, the enigmatic author M. Marsin credited God for giving England William, ‘who hath continued to us our liberty & opportunities of seeking God ... So that thereby many might be awakened, and come out of their gross darkness.’⁹ Thomas Brookhouse, while asserting that millennial authority would be found in priestly rather than monarchical forms, stressed the importance of William’s coming to the throne in a not-so-subtle allusion to the king’s House of Orange lineage. Old Testament prophecy (Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 6:12) spoke of a branch emerging to build the temple and rule in peace and justice, which Brookhouse interpreted as an orange tree ‘whose leaves’ of civil and ecclesiastical government provided ‘Shade and Protection’.¹⁰ Comparing Charles II to Saul, and describing James’s rule as only a brief disruption, Brookhouse labelled William ‘our David’ who would lay the foundation of the New Jerusalem.¹¹

Even as late as 1699 the author of the *Short Survey of the Kingdom of Christ*, while not wholly flattering to civil powers and ecclesiastical authorities, recognised the witnesses’ rise from the dead at the end of James’s reign and grudgingly conceded that ‘the Hierarchy and interested Men in the Nation’ had helped to swallow up the ‘Flood of Popery ... in the late Revolution, lest they drown with her’ (an allusion to Revelation 12:16).¹² Expressing similar mixed feelings, the *Mysteries of God Finished* attached great chronological significance to the years between 1685 and

⁸ John Tutchin, *A Poem upon Their Majesties Speeches to the Nonconformist Ministers* (n.p., n.d. [1690?]), brs.; *An Enquiry into the Vision of the Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses, and the Falling of the Tenth Part of the City* (1692), sig. A3r, pp. 9, 14, 15, 37. Tutchin had participated in Monmouth’s Rebellion in 1685, and was captured and punished horribly for his involvement; he would later also run afoul of first William III’s and then Queen Anne’s administrations: J.A. Downie, ‘Tutchin, John’, *ODNB*.

⁹ Thomas Ward and Valentine Evans, *Two Witnesses to the Midnight Cry* (1691), p. 4; M. Marsin, *The Near Approach [sic] of Christ’s Kingdom, Clearly Proved by Scripture* (1696), p. 18.

¹⁰ Thomas Brookhouse, *The Temple Opened: or, the Great Mystery of the Millennium, and the First Resurrection Revealed* (1696), pp. 50–51; sig. A2v.

¹¹ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, p. 49.

¹² *A Short Survey of the Kingdom of Christ Here on Earth with His Saints* (1699), p. 55.

1689. This work found the witnesses' call from heaven coinciding with the end of James II's reign, and argued that the 'Debauchery ... Oppression and Persecution' of Charles II's reign were such 'Antichristian Abominations, that nothing less than Popery it self was indulged and propagated in the midst of us, and prevail'd to be enthroned', causing the two witnesses' death in the first place.¹³ The author was further aghast that it had actually been a popish king, using dispensing power, who had provided toleration for Protestant nonconformity: this was 'Liberty ... upon the Tenure Antichrist saw meet to give for a present Expedient', rather than proper recognition of the correctness of the dissenting stance 'upon Christ's Authority'.¹⁴ Thomas Brookhouse explained toleration as the only significant purpose of James's reign, to make the witnesses call to heaven (Revelation 11:12) 'more conspicuous' by compelling 'their greatest Enemies to do it: And when he had done this ... flies away ... For though the Lion and the Lamb may, the Whore and the Bride must not lie down together'.¹⁵

The conviction, shared by nonconformists and supporters of the Church of England, that the achievements of the Revolution of 1688–89 marked a crucial prophetic development belies the opinion that a belief in the apocalyptic significance of contemporary events was only the domain of radicals and those committed to overthrowing monarchical government. Nor did apocalyptic and millenarian speculation simply fade away after these extraordinary circumstances. While the events of the late 1680s and early 1690s inspired an immediate outpouring of millenarian speculation, writers continued to publish apocalyptic works throughout the last decade of the century, showing a durable and continuing base of apocalyptic belief.

Although specific details varied in application, the fundamental interpretive framework of apocalyptic thought at the end of the seventeenth century differed little from the earlier, mid-century variety. It is useful to first describe the conventions of understanding apocalyptic prophecy generally accepted by English expositors in the later seventeenth century, and then turn to examine how such interpretations were adapted and moulded to fit with the specific events and circumstances of the 1690s. Although there is not enough space here for a complete examination of the intricacies of apocalyptic scriptural exegesis, it is important to state that, by the 1690s, Joseph Mede's historicist method of interpretation had won out. First set out in his *Clavis apocalyptica* (1627) and later translated and published by order of the House of Commons as *Key of the Revelation* in the early 1640s, Mede's explanation of Revelation's prophecies documented the progress of the Christian Church through human history from its inception in apostolic times to its eventual, future triumph in a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ and the saints on earth. As Samuel Petto, a Congregational minister from Sudbury in

¹³ *The Mysteries of God Finished: or an Essay Toward the Opening of the Mystery of the Mystical Numbers in Scriptures* (1699), pp. 17–18, 33, 42, 43.

¹⁴ *Mysteries of God Finished*, p. 42.

¹⁵ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, p. 26.

Suffolk, described it in his tract *Revelation Unveiled* (1693), here ‘we may discern what an answerableness there have been in Events in the several Ages to what is contained in the Prophecies ... Here we may see how Prophecies have turned into History’. Similarly, Edward Waple, vicar of St Sepulchre’s in London and canon of Winchester, noted that Revelation allowed ‘Those who have skill in History and Chronology ... [to] exercise it, with great Delight and Satisfaction’.¹⁶

Historical dates became essential elements of apocalyptic interpretations because of the importance of matching prophetic episodes and intervals to actual events. The book of Revelation itself suggested time periods attached to its significant imagery, such as the 1,260 days of the two witnesses prophesying (11:3) and the woman in the wilderness (12:6), as well as the 42 months of the beast’s reign (13:5). The historicist interpretation depended upon the understanding of these ‘prophetic days’ as actual years (based on Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, which equated a day to a year), which allowed them to coincide with longer historical eras. Special attention was paid to the beginning of such periods, linking them to particular incidents or circumstances suitable to reinforce general doctrinal and polemical purposes. Walter Cross located the start of the 1,260 years of the beast’s reign in the decade between AD 450 and 460, when he perceived papal government over Rome emerged.¹⁷ In 1692, the *Enquiry into the Vision of the Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses* placed the date of the woman fleeing to the wilderness closer to the year 400 when the Roman Empire’s power in the West began to decline at the death of Theodosius, and the beginning of the beast’s reign at 476 when the western empire collapsed after Augustulus fled Rome.¹⁸ While variations occurred within this dating, the significance was the association between the beast and papal power, which confirmed the predominantly anti-Catholic nature of early modern English apocalyptic thought. Thomas Brookhouse characterised

¹⁶ Samuel Petto, *The Revelation Unveiled* (1693), sig A2v; Edward Waple, *The Book of Revelation Paraphrased; with Annotations on Each Chapter* (1693), sig. a4v. See also, for example, Walter Garrett, *Theorems; Evincing, That the Subject of the Fourth and Fifth Chapters of the Revelation, is the Church of England, B.L.E.* (n.d.), p. 6; *Eclectical Chiliasm; or, a Discourse Concerning the State of Things from the Beginning of the Millennium to the End of the World* (1700), sig. A5v, pp. 1, 2. Petto’s Congregational association is noted in A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy’s Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660–2* (1933; Oxford, 1988) [hereafter cited as *Calamy Revised*], p. 388. For a summary of Waple’s biographical details, see J. Venn and J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900, Part 1 – From the Earliest Times to 1751* (Cambridge, 1922–27) [hereafter cited as *Alumni Cantab.*], 4, p. 329.

¹⁷ Walter Cross, *The Summ of Two Sermons on the Witnesses, and the Earthquake that Accompanies Their Resurrection* (1692), pp. 4–5.

¹⁸ *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 3–4. See also Petto, *Revelation Unveiled*, pp. 39, 50, 58–9; Waple, *Revelation Paraphrased*, pp. 178–9, 209–10, 291, 395–7; *Mysteries of God*, p. 31.

the corruption of the early Christian Church as a fall ‘into the Baudy House of Rome; and so She that was at First a Pure Virgin, became a Prostitute, and is now that Great Whore of Babylon’.¹⁹ The London Particular Baptist Benjamin Keach identified all of the persecutions by the Roman Church throughout its history as the image and mark of the beast.²⁰

Beyond the ubiquitous anti-papal connotation, the location and timing of other prophetic events were also important. The climactic period described in Revelation is the 1,000-year kingdom of Christ (20:3; see also Daniel 7:14, 18, 27). Although the specific belief in a millennial kingdom of Christ and the saints on earth is often associated with early modern radicalism, by the end of the seventeenth century it is apparent that this conviction was less threatening and part of a moderate apocalyptic mainstream shared by authors with varied religious and political perspectives. Walter Cross described seven ‘revolutions’, coinciding with the pouring of the seven vials (Revelation 15–16), including a destruction of papal officials, the fall of the Turkish Empire, and the conversion of the Jews, that would usher in ‘that long look’d for 1000 years’.²¹ Samuel Petto predicted the millennium would be ‘a glorious time ... a state of Blessedness’ on earth that would see ‘great Changes for the better in the Civil and Ecclesiastical State, great Purity of Administrations and Ordinances, and glorious Divine Presence’.²² The author of *Great Signs of the Times* (1699) asserted that this kingdom would be ‘a time wherein Truth and Righteousness, Unity and Peace shall fill the Earth’.²³ The Presbyterian divine Robert Fleming noted the nature of the millennial kingdom ‘lyes, in a visible surrender, and subjecting of the collective body of Nations, to the Scepter of his [Christ’s] Government, when the Princes and Kings of the earth should subject, their Regal Authority to his Rule and Empire’.²⁴ For Thomas

¹⁹ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, p. 32. Along with this identification of the ‘whore of Babylon’, other circumstances deemed significant in the condemnation of papal actions included the correspondence between descriptions of the little horn in Daniel (7:8, 20, 24–6) and the various beasts of Revelation with various characteristics of the papacy, as well as papal efforts to claim universal authority. See, for example, Petto, *Revelation Unveiled*, pp. 37–9; *The Roman Papal Empire, Proved to be the Image of the Roman Pagan Empire, from Revelation. Chap. xiii, Vers. xiv* (1700), pp. 3–4, 5, 6–8, 14–15; Waple, *Revelation Paraphrased*, p. 136; Walter Garrett, *OIDA SOU TA ERGA. Or, the Divine Foreknowledge of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Display’d in His Epistles to the Churches* (1700), p. 10; John Mason, *The Midnight-Cry. A Sermon Preached on the Parable of the Ten Virgins* (2nd edn, 1691), pp. 17–18.

²⁰ Benjamin Keach, *Sion in Distress: or, the Groans of the Protestant Church for Many Ages Past* (1692), pp. 4, 51–2 and n. 15.

²¹ Cross, *Summ of Two Sermons*, pp. 36, 35.

²² Petto, *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 144.

²³ *The Great Signs of the Times* (1699), p. 3.

²⁴ Robert Fleming, *An Epistolary Discourse on the Great Assistances to a Christians Faith* (1692), p. 164. The author here is the elder Robert Fleming (1630–94) who was pastor to the Scots church in Rotterdam; see D.G. Mullan, ‘Fleming, Robert’, *ODNB*.

Brookhouse the 1000-year kingdom of the saints would come at ‘the Expiration of the Whores Lease, when all the Kingdoms of the World devolve on Christ’. It would begin in Britain, marked by new civil and ecclesiastical administrations, and those who had suffered for the true Church would bear their experiences as ‘a Passo-porto to enter into the Millennium’.²⁵

These convictions anticipated a number of other events and circumstances that would signal the millennial advent. Expectation of the downfall of the papacy and the Church of Rome was almost universal in conventional Protestant apocalyptic thought. But many also believed that there would be a gathering and resurrection of the saints, the founding of the New Jerusalem, a conversion of the Jews to Christianity, their restoration to their biblical homeland, an end to the Ottoman Empire, a curbing of Satan’s actions in the world, and some type of extraordinary divine manifestation.²⁶ Although there was disagreement over the nature of Christ’s presence in His millennial kingdom, most authors advocated a continual spiritual, rather than personal, attendance. Most also agreed, however, that it would be established by some kind of glorious earthly appearance.²⁷ The author of *The Glorious Kingdom of Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ on Earth* (1693) was concerned to refute the Fifth Monarchist conceit that the millennium would be inaugurated through human endeavour before Christ’s return. The anonymous author insisted that the ‘conquering fighting Work’ to establish the millenarian

²⁵ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, sig. A4r, pp. 21, 22–3, 2, 3–4. Although holding a dissenting position, Brookhouse never clearly identifies his exact denominational affiliation. Little is known about the details of his life.

²⁶ For further examples of particular millennial beliefs and associated events, see Mason, *Midnight-Cry*, pp. 12, 15; Ward and Evans, *Two Witnesses*, pp. 20–21; *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 6, 32; Edward Paye, *Antichrist in Spirit Unmasked: or, Quakerism a Great Delusion* (1692), pp. 73–4, 85–6; Fleming, *Epistolary Discourse*, pp. 165, 26 (separately paginated); W.S., *The Glorious Kingdom of Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ on Earth, Rightly Timed* (1693), pp. 2, 6; Petto, *Revelation Unveiled*, pp. 127–45, 156–61; Waple, *Revelation Paraphrased*, sig. d3r, pp. 433, 443, 493; Jane Lead, *The Enochian Walks with God* (1694), pp. 15, 31–2, 33; William Whiston, *A New Theory of the Earth* (1696), pp. 376–8; Digby Bull, *A Letter of a Protestant Clergy-man to the Reverend Clergy of the Church of England* (1695), p. 52; Samuel Cradock, *A Brief and Plain Exposition and Paraphrase of the Whole Book of the Revelation* (1696), pp. 116, 217–18; Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, pp. 1, 7, 14, 15, 39–40; *Short Survey*, pp. 19, 20–23, 31; *Great Signs*, pp. 1–2; *Mysteries of God*, p. 47; *Eclectical Chiliasm*, sig. A6r, pp. 5, 20, 32–3; *Roman Papal Empire*, p. 31; Marsin, *Near Approach*, pp. 6–7, 8–9, 28–9; M. Marsin, *Truth Vindicated, Against All Heresies, Shewing How the Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent is Distinguished* (1698), pp. 81, 91; M. Marsin, *Two Sorts of Latter Days, Proved from Scripture* (1699), pp. 11, 14.

²⁷ For some example of the variety of opinions on the characteristics of Christ’s presence in the millennium, see *Eclectical Chiliasm*, p. 20; Mason, *Midnight-Cry*, pp. 12–14; Lead, *Enochian*, p. 32; *Short Survey*, pp. 12–13, 14; Waple, *Revelation Paraphrased*, pp. 443, 493; Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, pp. 4–6, 46, 48; Petto, *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 144; Fleming, *Epistolary Discourse*, pp. 32–4; Evans and Ward, *Two Witnesses*, p. 21.

reign could not be done prior to Christ's appearance, yet he was also concerned to avow that he was 'not in the least denying' the doctrine of the 1,000-year kingdom on earth.²⁸ Opinion did vary on the government and characteristics of the millennial kingdom: predictions ranged from an ecclesiastical administration with a circuit of itinerant preachers going out at regular intervals to convert the world, to a time of a great prosperity in which 'there will no longer be need of Ships for War or Foreign Commerce and Traffick' and where 'Christian Princes [would] pour their treasures into the Holy Land'.²⁹ John Mason, who inspired a popular millenarian movement in Buckinghamshire in the early 1690s, hoped for circumstances 'which no other Kings have been able to accomplish ... Unity without Division, Verity without Error, spirituality without Formality, Hypocrisy, or Censure'.³⁰

Such millenarian anticipation and speculation was not projected into a distant and indefinite future. Authors with diverse religious and political perspectives expected and expressed impending apocalyptic accomplishment in a variety of ways. M. Marsin dedicated her 1696 tract on *The Near Approach of Christ's Kingdom* to Parliament and the king in the hope 'That they may know what God is going about to do, so as to prepare for the coming of Christ', and she warned that putting 'the day far off' would result in Christ's return taking people 'as a snare'.³¹ Thomas Brookhouse described the present civil and ecclesiastical state as a 'Crucible' within which 'the Fire of Gods Wrath will quickly melt it down, and make it ready for a New Impression', while the Quaker Henry Mollineux counselled his readers to be vigilant because the wrath of lamb was at hand.³² Although the nonjuror Digby Bull advised the clergy of the Church of England to strengthen themselves against an imminent resurgence of Catholicism in England for a short period, symbolised by the two witnesses' death (Revelation 11:7–10), he also chastened them because 'our blessed Lord is coming and at hand' but their 'works ... are not found perfect before God'.³³ In a sermon inspired by an actual earthquake on 8 September 1692, Walter Cross noted that this literal event

²⁸ *Glorious Kingdom*, pp. 5–6, 1–2.

²⁹ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, sig. A2v, pp. 11, 21, 33, 35–6, 42–3, 46; *Eclectical Chiliasm*, pp. 31, 39.

³⁰ Mason, *Midnight-Cry*, p. 12.

³¹ Marsin, *Near Approach*, sigs. A2r, A3v. In his entry on her for the *ODNB* Tim Hitchcock notes that little is known about Marsin other than a scattering of details in her published works. He describes her theological position as 'unique', given that she does not provide any evidence of denominational attachment – Hitchcock concludes that she is 'the first and only "Marsinite"' (T. Hitchcock, 'Marsin, [Mersin, Mercin], M.', *ODNB*).

³² Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, p. 56; Henry Mollineux, *Antichrist Unveiled, by the Finger of Gods Power; and His Visage Discovered by the Light of Christ Jesus* (1695), pp. 63–4.

³³ Bull, *Letter*, p. 1, quote at p. 35. See also Digby Bull, *The Watch-man's Voice, Giving Warning to All Men of the Dreadful Day of the Lord, which He Apprehends to be at Hand* (1695), p. 5 [*recte*, p. 3 (sig. A2r) – the first page of text is erroneously paginated];

portended an approaching mystical one that would signal the rising of the witnesses (Revelation 11:13), and Benjamin Keach associated the recent earthquakes in the world with the pouring of the vials of God's wrath.³⁴ Church of England minister Walter Garrett also notified his readers that they were living during 'the latter end' of the pouring of the vials, while the *Great Signs of the Times* suggested its eponymous incidents indicated coming apocalyptic fulfilment.³⁵ Again, conforming and dissenting voices could agree in the pertinence and immediate importance of prophetic belief, if not always concurring on the precise meaning of its application to present events and circumstances.

The chronological placement of prophetic periods and eras often had the purpose of locating millennial accomplishment, and the events that would precede it, within immediate reach. Based on his interpretation of the trampling of the temple (Revelation 11:2) and the death of the two witnesses, Digby Bull gloomily predicted the return of popery to England in 1717 (precisely on the significant date of 5 November, the anniversary of the foiling of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605). Even so, Bull reassured his readers that this Catholic resurgence would be brief and would end with the witnesses' resurrection (Revelation 11:11–12) and the expiration of the 1260 years in about 1721. In addition, Bull's calculation for the start of the millennium in 1826 was based on his explanation of the number 666 as a period of years after the papal beast began to persecute the proto-Protestant Albigensians and Waldensians in 1160.³⁶ There were other specific chronological applications as well. The author of *Enquiry into the Vision of the Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses*, having placed the beginning of the 1,260 years in the very early fifth century AD, asserted that they had expired around 1660 and were followed by the death of the witnesses. The millennium itself, through adding periods of 30 and 45 more years from the book of Daniel (12:11–12), would start in 1735.³⁷ Similarly, the author of a tract entitled *The Mysteries of God Finished* (1699) calculated 1,260 years from the onset of the papacy's temporal power in

Digby Bull, *The Church's Request to All Her Faithful Sons and Children* (1695), pp. 19–20, 23.

³⁴ Cross, *Summ of Two Sermons*, p. 2; Benjamin Keach, *A Trumpet Blown in Zion, or an Allarm in God's Holy Mountain* (1694), pp. 35–6. For other similar predictions of the imminent fulfilment of pre-millennial prophecies, see, for example, Ward and Evans, *Two Witnesses*, p. 10; Marsin, *Two Sorts*, p. 16; Fleming, *Epistolary Discourse*, pp. 185, 193; *Glorious Kingdom*, pp. 34–5; Elizabeth Redford, *A Warning From the Lord to the City and Nation* (1695), pp. 1, 2.

³⁵ Walter Garrett, *A Paraphrase Upon Rev. I* (1699), p. 1; Walter Garrett, *A Persuasive to the Study of the Revelation: or, an Exposition of the Three First Verses of That Prophecy* (1699), p. 8; *Great Signs*, pp. 2, 7.

³⁶ Bull, *Letter*, pp. 1, 15–17, 29–30, 34, 39, 52; Bull, *Church's Request*, pp. 19, 20, 23. The prediction of the exact day for Catholic resurgence in England comes in Digby Bull, *A Farther Warning of Popery, and of the Second Dreadful Wo That are Now Certainly at Hand* (1710), p. 42.

³⁷ *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 3, 5, 6, 7–8.

425 to the death of the witnesses in 1685; their rise in 1688 initiated the pouring of the vials, ending with the inauguration of the millennium 45 years later, in about 1733.³⁸ Less exactly, but no less purposefully, Walter Cross placed the initiation of temporal power in the papacy between the years 450 and 460, with the destruction of the papal beast 1,260 years later, between 1710 and 1720.³⁹ Other variations existed as well: the Presbyterian Samuel Cradock, who had been ejected from the living of North Cadbury in Somerset in 1662, argued the millennium had begun already in the early Reformation, about 1530, while Edward Waple asserted it would start after 1772.⁴⁰

While the imminent fulfilment of such millenarian predictions is noteworthy enough in its own right, even more significant is the pertinence of recent or contemporaneous events and circumstances to unfolding apocalyptic design. Edward Waple asserted that the prophecies of Revelation ‘afford satisfaction ... For from hence men may learn not to be too much disquieted at great Changes, and Revolutions in Churches, and States ... because they are from God ... [and] all such great Events are in some way ... conducive to Christ’s Kingdom’.⁴¹ John Mason affirmed that certain of Revelation’s prophecies were meant for his contemporaries: ‘Not our Fore-fathers, nor them that come after us ... [but] It’s spoken of England and this Country, and this Town and Congregation’.⁴² Calculation of prophetic chronology and application of apocalyptic imagery took on even more immediate political and religious significance in this way.

The demonstration of the use of apocalyptic meaning to validate the results of the Revolution of 1688–89 has already shown how Revelation’s prophecies could be interpreted as unfolding in contemporary events. Changing international motives and conditions after 1689 also played out in apocalyptic literature, and the understanding of prophetic fulfilment was not limited to circumstances in England but took on wider connotations. According to John Mason, the effects of the seventh vial would be felt in the Catholic territories of Germany as well as in France and Italy.⁴³ The author of *The Roman Papal Empire* (1700) asked readers to consider the continued oppression of European Protestants by the beast. Similarly,

³⁸ *Mysteries of God*, pp. 26, 29–30, 31, 33, 47. This author also included calculations of the beginning, and the similarly dated millenarian end, of the 2,300 prophetic days of Daniel 8:14. See *Mysteries of God*, pp. 17–18, 29, 33, 47.

³⁹ Cross, *Summ of Two Sermons*, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁰ Cradock, *Brief and Plain Exposition*, pp. 116, 217–18; Waple, *Revelation Paraphrased*, pp. 212–13; Stuart Handley, ‘Cradock, Samuel’, *ODNB; Calamy Revised*, p. 140; *Alumni Cantab.*, 1, p. 411.

⁴¹ Waple, *Revelation Paraphrased*, sig. b3r.

⁴² Mason, *Midnight-Cry*, p. 19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Samuel Petto and Walter Cross found the death of the witnesses caused by the continued power of the beast in France, Poland, Germany and Hungary.⁴⁴

There had always been the universal component to English apocalypticism – that the battle against the beast in England would also lead to the victory of Protestantism and the final downfall of Catholicism in the world – but in the 1690s this international context took on further importance. Especially significant was the fact that England was now engaged in a major European war. Thomas Beverley identified the new monarchs' significance, this time as a military sign of the imminent return of Christ. In 1691, after noting the 'Surprizing' and 'Wonderful' victory in Ireland, Beverley went on to explain that even Catholic powers could be used to fulfil God's purpose. He asserted that Catholic rulers would become the ten kings who hated the whore (Revelation 17:16), and William's role was as 'so Great a Protestant Prince ... at the Head of a Confederate Army', a reference to England joining the League of Augsburg against Louis XIV and France.⁴⁵ The next year, Beverley viewed William's lack of success against the French as merely a 'suspension of action by Providence' that would delay final victory until closer to 1697, the date Beverley predicted for the final destruction of the papal Church (he later identified the Treaty of Ryswick with France in 1697 as a partial accomplishment of this impending climax).⁴⁶

Other authors found similar apocalyptic representation in England's military affairs. Walter Cross interpreted the multinational alliance against France as the nations and tongues of Revelation 11:9, while the author of *The Glorious Kingdom* predicted that the 'great Wars and Rumours of Wars in the World' were signs that Christ's reign was close at hand.⁴⁷ Echoing this prophetic tone, *England's Alarum* (1693) justified the raising of 'Armies and navies against the enemies of our government and Religion and all that is dear to us' and stressed the need to raise 'the Militia, or Posse of Heaven' through prayer.⁴⁸ The author of this tract, the bookseller John Dunton, hinted at domestic discord over the cost of the war by acknowledging the burden of taxes but also affirmed their necessity to defend

⁴⁴ *Roman Papal Empire*, pp. 25–7; Petto, *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 163; Cross, *Summ of Two Sermons*, p. 5. See also *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁵ Beverley, *To the High Court of Parliament*, brs.; Thomas Beverley, *A Scheme of Prophecy Now To Be Fulfilled* (n.p., 1691), pp. 3–4.

⁴⁶ Thomas Beverley, *The Scripture-Line of Time: From the First Sabbath to the Great Sabbatism of the Kingdom of Christ* (1692), pp. 7–8 [this is from the version of this pamphlet found in the Cambridge University Library, shelf mark Bb*.9.29⁷; an alternate version is found in the *Early English Books* collection B2174]; Thomas Beverley, *A Review of What God Hath Been Pleased to Do This Year* (1698), p. 18; Thomas Beverley, *The Good Hope Through Grace* ([1700]), p. 62. See also Thomas Beverley, *The Grand Apocalyptic Question; When the Reign of Antichristianism, or the Papacy, Began?* (1701), p. 46.

⁴⁷ Cross, *Summ of Two Sermons*, p. 6; *Glorious Kingdom*, pp. 34–5.

⁴⁸ [John Dunton], *England's Alarum: Being an Account of God's Most Considerable Dispensations of Mercy and Judgment Towards These Kingdoms* (1693), sig. A3r, A3v.

the nation; Dunton argued that blame for this increased taxation could more aptly be laid at the feet of Charles II and James II for failing to keep France in check.⁴⁹

In addition to war, the recent rescinding of toleration for French Protestants also figured prominently in apocalyptic comment on international circumstances. Drue Cressener, vicar of Soham in Cambridgeshire, found the prophecy of the death of the two witnesses fulfilled in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by the French king and the persecution of the Huguenots that followed, while Edward Waple placed the period of the witnesses' death and resurrection as fitting precisely between the rescinding of French toleration and the coronation of William and Mary.⁵⁰ In a more poetic vein, John Mason's 'Hymn for the Coming of Christ' lamented:

French Saints begin the Cup,
Who seek their Home abroad;
Their Synagogues burnt up,
their Vineyards left for God.

Benjamin Keach, moreover, had the character of 'France' relate how:

Prodigious numbers of my natives have,
By this Whores means, found an untimely Grave.
The Barbarous Harlot would not be content,
To kill or drive them into Banishment.⁵¹

For Thomas Beverley, the war against France would initiate the dawn of the morning star (Revelation 2:28) on Protestants in France, brought about by the defeat of Louis XIV.⁵² Even at the end of the 1690s, M. Marsin continued to identify French Protestants as the two witnesses. Likewise, in its explanation of the meaning of Revelation 13:14, the pamphlet *The Roman Papal Empire* (1700) called for its readers' sympathy for 'our afflicted Brethren in France'.⁵³

Louis XIV naturally played a prominent role in the apocalyptic significance of these international events. In a new section in the 1692 edition of *Sion in Distress* Benjamin Keach noted a 'new-born Sorrow' in France, characterising Louis in verse as a 'proud Insulter whom no Oaths can bind, / An Arbitrary Tyrant

⁴⁹ Ibid., sig. A3r, p. 19. See also pp. 17–18.

⁵⁰ Drue Cressener, *A Demonstration of the First Principles of the Protestant Applications of the Apocalypse* (1690), sig. A3v–A4r, p. xviii; Waple, *Book of Revelation Paraphrased*, p. 241.

⁵¹ Mason, *Midnight-Cry*, p. 33; Keach, *Sion in Distress*, p. 79.

⁵² Thomas Beverley, *The Universal Doctrine of the Day of Judgment* (1691), sig. a2v; Beverley, *Scheme of Prophecy*, p. 1.

⁵³ Marsin, *Truth Vindicated*, pp. 39–44; *Roman Papal Empire*, p. 27.

unconfined'.⁵⁴ As it had during the Restoration (earlier editions in 1666, 1681 and 1689, as *Distressed Sion Relieved*), Keach's verse allegory continued to adapt to address contemporary concerns, this time the perceived threat to England from France and international Catholicism. Drue Cressener explained Louis's distraction with affairs in Germany in 1688 as a sign of God's intervention, allowing William to land in England.⁵⁵ John Whittel, a chaplain in William's army, described the French king as the 'gallick Tyrant' and the 'Dragon in the Apocalypse' to whom William would respond as 'another Michael' (Revelation 12:7), while John Dunton compared Louis to the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who was defeated by God for invading Judah (2 Kings 18:13; 19:32–37).⁵⁶ Thomas Beverley rounded out the French king's cast of characters, asserting that God had used various, less-than-godly individuals in the past to carry out His design for the world. Beverley likened Louis to Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod and the Roman emperor Diocletian.⁵⁷ In addition, Louis XIV's agreement to the Treaty of Ryswick was significant for his acceptance of William's claim to the English throne and as an abandonment of the French king's attempt at universal monarchy, though Beverley noted that these benefits could hardly have been conscious on Louis's part.⁵⁸ Though not all of these representations were directly apocalyptic, they certainly were used in the context of the prophetic significance of the circumstances of the 1690s.

There was, then, a shared belief among Anglican and dissenting apocalyptic interpreters in the impending fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecy, acceptance that the events of the late 1680s marked a significant prophetic turning point, and a general consensus that such apocalyptic accomplishment would result in Protestant England's rise to effect the downfall of Catholic power and the papacy in Europe. However, such concurrence did not mean that there was unanimous agreement on the ecclesiastical course being taken by the English Church. A number of purposes are apparent in the literature from the 1690s and, again, authors from widely varying political and religious positions used Revelation's prophecies, this time

⁵⁴ Keach, *Sion in Distress*, p. 79.

⁵⁵ Cressener, *Demonstration of the First Principles*, p. xix.

⁵⁶ John Whittel, *Constantinus Redivivus: or, A Full Account of the Wonderful Providences and Unparallell'd Successes That have All Along Attended the Glorious enterprises of the Heroical Prince, William the 3d* (1693), p. 72; Dunton, *England's Alarum*, sig. A3v.

⁵⁷ Thomas Beverley, *The Faith By Which We Are Justified, In a Scripture-Sense* (1695), pp. 22–3 (*Wing* [B4673] attributes this work to George Bright, but Beverley's authorship is acknowledged twice in catalogues of his books appended to works in 1696 and 1698); Thomas Beverley, *Indiction; or, Accounting By Fifteens, the Great Style of Prophetic Time* (1699), pp. 40–41.

⁵⁸ Beverley, *Review*, p. 6; Thomas Beverley, *A Most Humble Representation on a Further Review* (1698), p. 2.

to present their particular interpretations of the meaning of existing conditions in Church and State.

For Anglican authors, apocalyptic significance was found in the endorsement of the Church of England and the monarchy that upheld it. William Lloyd, then bishop of St Asaph, preached a sermon before Queen Mary on 30 January 1691 (the anniversary of the 'martyrdom' of Charles I) which styled the restoration of monarchy and the more recent re-establishment of Protestant monarchy as a 'Resurrection from the dead' 'a reference to the prophecy of the witnesses' and a sign of God's providence. Lloyd added his hope for God's 'absolute Promises that he hath given to his Church to be fulfilled in this Age'.⁵⁹ The most productive voice of Anglican apocalyptic interpretation in the 1690s was Walter Garrett. His explanations of Revelation were 'offered to the Serious Consideration of All Enemies of the Church of England' – in other words 'Dissenters and Separatists' – so that in proving the Church of England was the perfectly reformed Church indicated in apocalyptic prophecy, they might 'Persist not in their Dividing Practices and Unchristian Strifes and Emulations'.⁶⁰ Garrett posited English monarchs from Elizabeth to Charles II as those who passed the sealed book to the lamb in Revelation 5:6–7, and he further argued that Charles II, along with James II, and now William were the kings of the East whose way was prepared by the sixth vial in Revelation 16:12.⁶¹ While he did acknowledge the faults of Charles II, Garrett maintained that the restored king had been 'in the Hands of Christ, a Noble Instrument of our Political Redemption'. Garrett suggested that even if the king's 'Private Conversation' was 'hardly Suitable to that High Character ... God sometimes, in the Unsearchable Depths of his Wisdom and Justice, is Found to have made, of the Chief Stones in his Edifice, Stones of Stumbling' at which 'it Becomes not us (nay, it is very Dangerous for us) to be Offended'.⁶² Thus God's prophetic purpose was not limited by the very human failings of the former English monarch. For Garrett, Christ's honouring of the clergy and laity of the kingdom, 'with great Power, and Large Revenues ... and now no more, after the Restauration of the Church of England, to be taken from us,' confirmed the prominence of England in the apocalyptic plan.⁶³

Even the nonjuror Digby Bull identified Jerusalem as a type for 'our own Land and Nation ... and especially our own Church'.⁶⁴ However, as might be expected, Bull's endorsement was not total. Bull quoted Revelation's condemnation of liars to the lake of fire and brimstone (21:8) as a warning to those who 'have no regard to all these solemn Engagements which we call God to attest and bear Witness to'.

⁵⁹ William Lloyd, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen at Whitehall, January 30th* (1691), pp. 27, 29, 31.

⁶⁰ Garrett, *Theorems*, pp. 1, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6; Garrett, *Foreknowledge*, p. 11. See also: Garrett, *Foreknowledge*, p. 19; Garrett, *Paraphrase upon Rev. I*, p. 6.

⁶² Garrett, *Theorems*, pp. 6–7.

⁶³ Garrett, *Paraphrase*, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Bull, *Church's Request*, p. 12.

Equating this to popery, he chastised ‘Many of you, Reverend Brethren’ for ‘late Miscarriages in taking New Oaths’.⁶⁵ More explicitly, Bull identified Revelation’s two witnesses as ‘the eminent men of the Non jurors of this Kingdom ... being now suspended purely for a Point of Conscience’.⁶⁶ He further warned of God’s impending wrath to descend upon the nation if England did not reform its ways.⁶⁷

In contrast to supporters of the Church of England, however, dissenting authors demonstrated that a lot was still left to be desired in regard to the policies of the Established Church and dissenters’ place within it. This critique of the Anglican establishment is more reminiscent of mid-century apocalypticism, with the remnants of a godly minority continuing to stand in the face of the earthly powers that opposed them. This oppositional stance to authorities in the closing years of the seventeenth century also demonstrated that certain aspects of the radicalism of the apocalyptic ideas from the earlier period remained.

As noted above, *An Enquiry into the Vision of the Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses* located the death these two prophetic figures as occurring in about 1660. The position of the author is readily apparent in the identification of this date as the symbolic killing of ‘the Party that was then prevailed against, and here since continued Dissenters’.⁶⁸ The witnesses’ three and a half years of lying dead in the street began with the St Bartholomew’s Day expulsions of nonconforming clergy in August 1662; their resurrection commenced with nonconformist ministers filling London pulpits vacated due to the plague in 1665, and continued to February 1666 when deaths from the pestilence ceased.⁶⁹ Advancing his dissenting argument, the author contended that ‘Excesses in Government ... were perilous and Ruinous to True Religion and the Rights and Priviledges of the Subject’, as well as ‘Obstructive to the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom’. He added that England would remain under the beast’s power as long as ‘the National Church’ continued as ‘a politick Body’ using ‘humane [human] Laws supported by worldly Power’ to exclude ‘those who separate from her for Conscience sake’.⁷⁰ Similarly, Thomas Brookhouse located the rise of the witnesses as the end of persecution of nonconformists, placing this event in the late 1680s.⁷¹ The Quaker Henry Mollineux described the papacy as the whore and chief persecutor of the saints but went on to implicate English Protestantism as well. Adherents to the Established Church were among those who ‘look upon themselves as reformed from Popery’, yet continue to use ‘idolatrous Ceremonies ... [and] pernicious Practices, and Inventions to get Money by’, while the Church of England’s persecutions placed it

⁶⁵ Bull, *Letter*, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19–20.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29; Bull, *Watch-man’s Voice*, p. 25.

⁶⁸ *Enquiry into the Vision*, sig. A2r. See also sigs. A2v–A3r, pp. 7–8, 10, 11, 12

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

⁷⁰ *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 13, 12. See also pp. 10–11, 14–15.

⁷¹ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, p. 25.

‘within the compass of the false Church, Mystery Babylon’.⁷² Mollineux included among the ‘Children of Babylon’ those who depended on an educated ministry, and he described those who were baptised or took communion in the Church of England as receiving the mark of the beast.⁷³

In his *Discourse of Christ’s Second Coming* (1695), the Presbyterian Samuel Tomlyns, ejected in 1662 and a minister in Marlborough during the 1690s, criticised the continued persecution of ‘the Sincere People of God ... as Puritans ... [and] Fanaticks ... those of the same Nation, City, Neighbourhood’.⁷⁴ The author of the *Mysteries of God Finished* characterised the witnesses’ testimony as asserting ‘the Kingly Office of Christ’, which in recent years had found ‘the Beast taking it upon himself to persecute them as Rebels, and not as Hereticks only’, further criticising ‘the Darkness that over-spread these Nations by Superstition and Human Institutions received by Tradition, that gendred to Popery’.⁷⁵ The tract *Eclectical Chiliasm* (1700) contended that the beast symbolised ‘Christian or rather Antichristian’ persecution of the ‘sincere professors of the Gospel’.⁷⁶

Concerns that the religious and political circumstances of England had not yet been satisfactorily resolved by the latter years of the seventeenth century caused some apocalyptic writers to look back to the Civil Wars and Interregnum for signs of previous positive apocalyptic accomplishment. The *Enquiry into the Vision Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses* identified the year 1648 as ‘disastrous to Crowned Heads’, further noting that the fourth vial began at Charles I’s death and ended with his younger son relinquishing the throne in 1688.⁷⁷ According to this author, England had left the beast in power in civil government after the Reformation, hindering further godly reform and causing the Civil Wars; Charles I himself had been ‘swayed to such Excesses in Government as were perilous and Ruinous to True Religion, and the Rights and Priviledges of the Subject, and therein obstructive to the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom’.⁷⁸ The tract, however, stopped short of justifying the execution of the king, instead suggesting that overzealous retribution had caused the Interregnum to fail, although also remarking that religious ‘back sliding’ continued from the Restoration to the Revolution.⁷⁹

Thomas Brookhouse had a different assessment of the Interregnum, though not altogether dissimilar in its implications. Brookhouse’s work opens with the pronouncement of ‘a Bold Herald’ being sent ‘to Claim his Right’ to destroy

⁷² Mollineux, *Antichrist Unveiled*, pp. 72, 81–2. See also pp. 10–11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 200–201.

⁷⁴ Samuel Tomlyns, *A Discourse of Christ’s Second Coming, and the Purging of His Kingdom* (1695), pp. 10–11. *Calamy Revised*, p. 488; *Alumni Cantab.* vol. 4, p. 248.

⁷⁵ *Mysteries of God*, pp. 28, 40. See also pp. 41–2.

⁷⁶ *Eclectical Chiliasm*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 13, 15–16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, 13.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.

existing temporal and spiritual powers – the author’s marginal note identifies this ‘Herald’ as ‘O.C.’, a clear reference to Oliver Cromwell.⁸⁰ Brookhouse further endorsed Cromwell’s actions by approvingly pronouncing that ‘the head of Monarchy was Cut off, and the Head of Episcopacy too; and the Head of the Republick and Presbytery (had they any) would have been cut off too’, insisting that such drastic actions were necessary to set up a new millennial administration of the world.⁸¹ Though not quite so blatant, the author of the *Short Survey of the Kingdom of Christ* asserted that the Civil Wars had seen ‘Popery and Hierarchy ... give way to the Gospel-light’, with ‘the Blood of the Lamb’ being shed for this cause and the witnesses risking ‘their Lives in the high places of the Field’.⁸² Another anonymous tract agreed that the Civil Wars had seen the witnesses’ testimony ‘to the Kingly Office of Christ ... confirmed in the Martyrdom of Many of those concerned in the finishing of this Testimony’, as well as in ‘stupendous and wonderful’ successes.⁸³

The survival and articulation of this sanctioning of the motives and results of the Civil Wars suggests that the link with radical ideas from the past – such as justification of armed resistance to the king, the abolition of monarchy and episcopacy, and the endorsement of the Interregnum government – was not completely severed by the end of the seventeenth century, with some authors in the 1690s placing mid-century events in a positive apocalyptic context. There was also language itself that hearkened back to that more radical rhetoric. John Mason’s devotees Thomas Ward and Valentine Evans predicted a worldly pre-millennial activism reminiscent of Fifth Monarchist ideas in the 1650s, in which ‘God will have an Army of Saints to cut down Babylon, then Christ will appear in the Clouds’ and the saints would inherit the kingdoms of the earth.⁸⁴ The Quaker Sebastian Ellythorp denounced the ‘Antichristian Oppression of Tythes’ and the ‘Imposition of Oaths’, and he railed against the powers that imprisoned him as ‘Babylon, the false Spirit, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth, in whose Skirts is found the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus’.⁸⁵ Another Quaker, Henry Mollineux, noted how English monarchs combined their power with the persecuting beast, but predicted that God would destroy the kings of the earth who had thus been seduced by the whore of Babylon.⁸⁶ Jane Lead, a founding member of the Philadelphian Society, awaited the infusion of God’s spirit into the

⁸⁰ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, sig. A2r.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 27, 41, sig. A2v.

⁸² *Short Survey*, p. 52.

⁸³ *Mysteries of God*, pp. 28, 39–40.

⁸⁴ Ward and Evans, *Two Witnesses*, pp. 23, 21.

⁸⁵ Sebastian Ellythorp, *A Testimony Wherein is Shewed Certain Weighty Reasons Why the National Ministers, their Way and Practice is Conscientiously disowned* (1692), title-page, p. 11.

⁸⁶ Mollineux, *Antichrist Unveiled*, pp. 200–201, 78–9.

faithful that ‘will turn the World upside down’, further noting that ‘each one [shall] become a Christ’.⁸⁷

Combining its opinions on the Civil Wars and the events of 1688–89, the *Enquiry into the Vision of the Slaying and Rising of the Witnesses* refuted William Sherlock’s condemnation of the results of the 1640s. Sherlock’s *Case of Allegiance Due to Sovereign Powers*, first published in the autumn of 1690, had defended William and Mary’s right to the throne based on arguments of providence and divine endorsement.⁸⁸ The author of the *Enquiry* argued that Sherlock, in justifying William and Mary’s taking the throne, must similarly recognise the defeat and overthrow of Charles I as a comparable work of providence and divine intercession: ‘Cromwel[!] and the other powers that prevailed in those times ... were set up by the immediate interposition of providence, for preserving and promoting the interest of Christs Kingdom, against those Antichristian designs driven on, which involved the Nation in war’.⁸⁹ Carrying on the critique of the continued exclusion of dissenters from civil government, the author argued that millennial progress would only be achieved through godly government: ‘the despotick dominion of worldly Rulers, is but the Empire of the devil ... those bands of corruption which linkt sinful Man to the Thraldom of his power ... [and make] Men ... unmeet for, Liberty ... and ... there’s no true Freedom but that wherewith Christ does make them free’.⁹⁰

Sharing a similar regard for the results of the 1640s and 1650s, Thomas Brookhouse suggested that, to achieve the millennial kingdom, nations ‘must first help to kill the Bear, and then they may share the Skin of his Power’.⁹¹ England’s own effort in this regard had been achieved in the destruction of monarchy and episcopacy in the 1640s and 1650s, and Brookhouse, rather clumsily, argued that those years had seen the establishment of millennial priestly rule. Maintaining that old civil and ecclesiastical government forms had been rejected and made ‘extinct’ at the end of the Civil Wars, Brookhouse explained their restoration in the 1660s and continued existence afterwards as a ‘suffrance; They are but Trespassers upon the Premises; The Premises, the Power and Government belongs to the new Birth, the

⁸⁷ Lead, *Enochian*, pp. 32, 33.

⁸⁸ William Sherlock, *The Case of the Allegiance Due to Sovereign Powers, Stated and Resolved, According to Scripture and Reason* (1691), pp. 2–3 and *passim*. Sherlock’s pamphlet was the most popular work published in the allegiance controversy of the early 1690s, reaching at least eight editions and over 30,000 copies published, as well as engendering more than 40 printed responses: M. Goldie, ‘The Revolution of 1689 and the Structure of Political Argument: An Essay and an Annotated Bibliography of Pamphlets on the Allegiance Controversy’, *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 83 (1980): pp. 480, 557.

⁸⁹ *Enquiry into the Vision*, pp. 30, 29.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹¹ Brookhouse, *Temple Opened*, p. 12.

heiress, of which they are at present but Guardians'.⁹² Christ's kingdom would be a spiritual 'Empire', advanced by an evangelical army of prophets and preachers.⁹³

While it is apparent that these apocalyptic assertions echoed sentiments and endorsed achievements that would have been deemed radical in the middle of the seventeenth century, it is necessary to consider whether they were purposefully expressed with radical intentions in the 1690s. There are several reasons to suggest they were not. First, caution about the potential danger of apocalyptic beliefs – due to the threat of them inspiring radical movements as they had in the past – was clearly articulated, even by those who explicitly believed and advanced millenarian ideas. Also, those elements of apocalyptic discourse that might have been termed radical during an earlier period seem to have been mitigated at the end of the seventeenth century by the political and ecclesiastical achievements and the concessions of the Revolution of 1688–89.

The repeated warnings against human efforts to bring about the millennium demonstrate a continued concern over the potential of apocalyptic thought to inspire radical action. For example, as Thomas Brookhouse's millenarian theories showed, while an author could more safely suggest that the actions against monarchy in the middle of the century had achieved apocalyptic fulfilment, it was also still prudent to acknowledge, and incorporate, the person currently in power as part of the millennial plan. As shown above, Brookhouse tried hard to rationalise William III's role, and he also explicitly denied his tract's radical potential: its first line acknowledged that 'This Address at first may seem an Enthusiastical Strain' but concludes 'it will be found otherwise'. Brookhouse unambiguously stated that Christ's kingdom would be established by Christ's 'Word' and not by 'Fire and Sword'.⁹⁴ Again and again, other apocalyptic writers took similar precautions.

The initial purpose in writing *The Glorious Kingdom* in 1693 was to refute the 1672 treatise *Theopolis* (one of the most suggestively radical millenarian works written after the mid-1660s in England) and its assertions that Christ would return only after the millennial kingdom was established by the godly on earth.⁹⁵ *The Glorious Kingdom* countered that such ideas in the earlier work would tend 'to prompt Christians to the unchristian and unbecoming Service the Gospel in no

⁹² Ibid., p. 23. See also sig. A2v, pp. 13, 28, 41–42

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 35–6. See also p. 13.

⁹⁴ Ibid., sigs. A2r, A4r.

⁹⁵ The anonymous author of *Theopolis* maintained that the war to inaugurate the millennial kingdom would be fought by the godly, and Christ would not be present at the 'smiting' of temporal powers because he had to remain at the right hand of God, thus implying that the saints alone would take action against earthly monarchs: *Theopolis, or the City of God New Jerusalem, in Opposition to the City of the Nations Great Babylon* (1672), pp. 25, 27, 28–9, 30–31, 32, 33, 78, 83–4. Richard Greaves attributed authorship of this 1672 work to Henry Danvers: R.L. Greaves, 'The Tangled Careers of Two Stuart Radicals: Henry and Robert Danvers', *Baptist Quarterly* 29 (1981), p. 36; R.L. Greaves, 'Henry Danvers', *ODNB*.

ways enjoins them, and to exasperate the Government against them'. In addition to this defence of political powers on earth, the author of *The Glorious Kingdom* further asserted that any 'conquering work' in the world would be done solely by Christ, and that the destruction of the whore would not be carried out by Christ's followers.⁹⁶ John Mason blamed the fear of the doctrine of Christ's earthly kingdom on those who used it 'to establish seditious Principles and Practices against the Powers that be'. In the same vein, the author of *Great Signs of the Times* affirmed that Christ's kingdom would not 'be begun or continued by the Sword, or any Instrument of War'.⁹⁷ The nonjuror Digby Bull was also careful to state his intent not 'to blow up any sparks of Rebellion, or to give any encouragement to rise up against the Government', and he declared that he had 'always born a Loyal Mind, and never entertained any Rebellious Thoughts ... and, thro' Divine help, Loyal I intend to be in the blackest of Times'.⁹⁸ Finally, Thomas Beverley assured his readers that the inauguration of Christ's kingdom would 'not Lessen but Aggrandize both Royal and Magistratical Honour and Authority ... and will not in the least give Countenance to Anarchy, Confusion, or Resistance to that Ordinance of God by either Levellism [*sic*] or Rebellion'.⁹⁹

As a last consideration concerning the perceived radical implications of apocalyptic ideas, it is important to recognise that the events of 1688–89 had made arguments affirming God's providential, and prophetic, actions against reigning monarchs – or, at least against some monarchs – part of the case in support of the post-1689 regime. Thus the tracts and authors that acknowledged the benefits of the achievements of the 1640s and 1650s were not advocating further rebellion against monarchical government but, rather, confirming the events of those years as steps in the right apocalyptic direction. In this, it seems that comment upon the mid-century disruption of monarchical rule after 1689 was less provocative than it had been to the sons of Charles I, to whom, understandably, those actions were more immediately and recently pertinent. Thus, positive apocalyptic reference to the Civil Wars' consequences was no longer an instigation to radicalism but, instead, a recognition of changed political and ecclesiastical circumstances of the late seventeenth century.

This essay originated out of a consideration of movements and ideas that 'challenged fundamental political, religious or social axioms' of their day, and an examination of the usefulness of the term 'radical', the existence of a radical tradition, and the nature of radicalism across geographical, cultural, and

⁹⁶ *Glorious Kingdom*, pp. iv, 5–6.

⁹⁷ Mason, *Midnight-Cry*, p. 4; *Great Signs*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Bull, *Watch-man's Voice*, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Beverley, *Review*, sig. a–1v.

temporal spaces.¹⁰⁰ In its final form, though, it has gone further, demonstrating the continuation of apocalyptic convictions from the earlier to the later seventeenth century and showing that this continuity was not found in radicalism alone, but in more moderate expressions of Anglicanism and dissent as well. While not presuming to have commented upon radicalism's usefulness as an avenue of historical enquiry, nor to have brought us any closer to defining the term, it does show that a belief can be either radical or not depending on the purpose to and the circumstances within which it is used. In the context of the 1690s in England, then, apocalyptic ideas were neither necessarily radical nor moderate in themselves, but only in their application.

It should also be said that the close of the seventeenth century was chosen as an endpoint for this study only for convenience: this does not in any way imply a terminal date in the examination of apocalyptic ideas. As other works have shown, apocalypticism continued to influence, and be influenced by, perceptions of the prophetic import of events in the centuries that followed 1700.¹⁰¹ However, in this larger context, it is instructive to see that apocalypticism in seventeenth-century England was neither one-dimensional nor static, adapting to encompass the century's upheavals and to suit various needs. In this, the ability of apocalyptic thought to adjust and continue into the eighteenth century and beyond should not be surprising.

¹⁰⁰ 'Rediscovering radicalism in the British Isles and Ireland, c.1550–c.1700: movements of people, texts and ideas' Conference held 21–23 June 2006 (call for conference papers circulated April 2005).

¹⁰¹ For several more recent examples of the continuation of apocalyptic thought after 1700, see K.G.C. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge, 2000); C. Burdon, *The Apocalypse in England: Revelation Unravelling, 1700–1834* (Basingstoke, 1997); A. Amanat and M. Bernhardtsson (eds), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America* (London, 2001); S. Hunt (ed.), *Christian Millenarianism: From the Early Church to Waco* (Bloomington, 2001); Arthur H. Williamson, *Apocalypse Then: Prophecy and the Making of the Modern World* (London, 2008).

Chapter 10

Mapping Friendship and Dissent: The Letters from Joseph Boyse to Ralph Thoresby, 1680–1710*

Sandra Hynes

In their introduction to *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650–1830*, Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith remarked that ‘the period in English history between 1640 and 1832 was marked by some common conditions and characteristics, bestowing a consistency upon those who pursued a political or religious vision different from that required by the state’.¹ During this period, they argued, different beliefs and church systems were accommodated within or without the established State Church so that a sense of religious continuity was achieved. The term radicalism implies the transformation of a system and in terms of religion radicalism suggests a move from mainstream belief to alternative beliefs.² Those who dissented from the beliefs expounded by the State Church therefore had to find ways to ensure that their belief system survived.

Interaction between Dissenters in different countries helped to sustain belief systems that were considered radical by any particular State Church. Presbyterianism rejected the Episcopal system of church government and favoured beliefs that were Calvinist, but was itself on the verge of becoming the State Church in England in the early 1640s. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, its radicalism had been both tempered and confirmed. It moved away from its eschatological connections, and finally became the established faith in Scotland in 1690. Beyond Scotland, however, Presbyterians continued to struggle as believers who were outside the State Church – they were still defined as Dissenters – and were viewed by Anglicans as a persistent threat. This radical condition can be illustrated through the lived experience of Dublin Presbyterian minister Joseph

* I would like to acknowledge the support of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences and would also like to thank the Yorkshire Archaeological Society for permission to quote from the Thoresby correspondence.

¹ T. Morton and N. Smith (eds), *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650–1830* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1–2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Boyse (1660–1728),³ who corresponded with Ralph Thoresby (1658–1725),⁴ an antiquarian who lived for most of his life in Leeds.

Boyse was the most important Presbyterian pamphleteer in Ireland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. His works petitioned for the Anglican State and Church to tolerate the Protestant dissenting communities in a context where Catholicism, and not radical Protestantism, was the real threat. In so doing, he engaged in an extended controversy with William King, then the Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and later Archbishop of Dublin, over the extent to which an accommodation between Anglicanism and Presbyterianism could be reached.⁵ King, who was a convert to Anglicanism from Presbyterianism, rejected Boyse's pleas highlighting how it was the State and the Established Church that defined what was radical and not Dissenters.

³ Joseph Boyse was born in Leeds in 1660. His father, Matthew, had been a Puritan minister in New England. Having been educated in Dissenting academies, Boyse moved to Holland to preach in the early 1680s. His removal to Dublin came in 1683 where he replaced the recently deceased minister Timothy Halliday at the wealthy Wood Street congregation. He played a major role in Irish religious life as a defender of Presbyterian principles, engaging in lengthy pamphlet debates. His *Sacramental Hymns* (1693) was a major addition to the devotional life of his congregation and his reputation was forged in his attempts to draw together the strands of Presbyterianism in Ireland. He died in 1728. See R. Gillespie, "'A good and godly exercise': singing the Word in Irish Dissent, 1660–1701", in K. Herlihy (ed.), *Propagating the Word of Irish Dissent, 1650–1800* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 24–45; A.W.G. Brown, *The Great Mr. Boyse: A Study of the Reverend Joseph Boyse Minister of Wood Street Church, Dublin 1683–1728* (Belfast, 1988).

⁴ Ralph Thoresby was born in Leeds in 1658. His father, John, collected coins and medals and he bequeathed his collection to his son in 1679. Thoresby's business concerns in rapeseed oil production were not successful and he devoted much of his energies to enlarging his antiquarian collection. This was facilitated by his wide circle of friends and correspondents who willingly transcribed inscriptions and sent rare finds. He founded a museum to show his collection in Leeds and, by the end of the seventeenth century, his research interests and publications centred on the history of Leeds, including the history of the Established Church in Leeds. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1697 and had conformed to the Established Church by the turn of the eighteenth century. He died in 1725.

⁵ William King was born in Antrim in 1650. In 1658, his family settled in Tyrone. He was a Scots Presbyterian who converted to Anglicanism and attended Trinity College Dublin in 1667. His spiritual awakening was prompted by a tutor at Trinity and he entered the Anglican ministry. King became Bishop of Derry in 1691 and Archbishop of Dublin in 1703. He died in 1729. See P. O'Regan, *Archbishop William King of Dublin (1650–1729) and the Constitution in Church and State* (Dublin, 2000); J. Richardson, 'William King: "man of faith and reason"' (unpublished PhD dissertation, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 1998). For a discussion of King's career as a polemical pamphleteer, see R. Gillespie, 'Irish print and Protestant identity: William King's pamphlet wars, 1687–1697', in V.P. Carey and U. Lotz-Heumann (eds), *Taking Sides?: Colonial and Confessional Mentalities in Early Modern Ireland: Essays in Honour of Karl. S. Bottigheimer* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 231–50.

Boyse's letters to Thoresby are an important record of dissenter life in a transnational context. Both men were English Presbyterians, but, while Thoresby remained for much of his life in England, Boyse travelled abroad as a minister. In their correspondence, Boyse describes his faith and his work as a minister in Dublin and in Amsterdam and the conditions for Dissenters there, while seeking to maintain his links with the wider non-conformist community abroad.⁶ In analysing Boyse's correspondence with Ralph Thoresby three points can be made in relation to radical religion. First, Boyse's sensitivity to the State's reaction to Dissenters suggests that it was often the State and its Established Church as much as the Dissenters that defined the limits of radicalism and orthodoxy. Second, and underlining this point, Boyse saw himself as a moderate in religious terms. Third, just as Boyse used his writings to draw his friendships and family connections together, so in turn these emotional and familial communities helped to sustain religious dissent transnationally – across geographical and political boundaries.

Besides their faith, the other common denominator for both Boyse and Thoresby was their shared hometown, Leeds. It was a dissenting hub in the late seventeenth century because between one-quarter and one-third of all worshippers living there were non-conformists. Boyse's family background had elements of dissent; he was born in Leeds on 14 January 1660, one of the sixteen children of the Puritan Matthew Boyse and his wife Elizabeth Jackson. His father was a clothier who had spent the best part of two decades in America where he had been an elder of the church at Rowley in New England before returning again to Leeds.

Boyse was educated at Richard Frankland's academy at Kendal in 1675 and Edward Veal's academy in Stepney in 1678. Later, in 1681, he became the domestic chaplain of the Dowager Countess of Donegal and this was followed by six months preaching in Amsterdam in 1682. The following year, he was invited to replace Timothy Halliday at Wood Street congregation in Dublin, an invitation which he gratefully accepted.

His correspondent, Thoresby, was also born in Leeds on 16 August 1658, one of fifteen children. His father was John Thoresby, a Leeds merchant and Dissenter who had fought for Parliament at Marston Moor and who was a leading member of Mill Hill congregation in Leeds since its foundation in 1672. Thoresby, after a brief period living in London and the Netherlands and frequenting non-conformist meetings there, became involved in the Mill Hill congregation from 1679. He took an active role and collected many of the dues for the church. He was particularly close to the second minister at Mill Hill, Thomas Sharpe, who was minister from 1678. Although he conformed occasionally to the Church of England, Thoresby was prosecuted as a non-conformist in 1683. Inheriting his father's collection of antiquities, Thoresby became known as an antiquarian and topographer as well

⁶ These letters are part of the Thoresby MSS at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds. They are characterised by Boyse's seal depicting an arrowhead and were sent between 1680 and 1710. Unfortunately no reciprocal letters from Thoresby to Boyse are extant.

as a collector of coins, medals, early printed books and other artefacts which supplemented the main part of the collection. The letters from Boyse and others to Thoresby show that he sought to increase his collection through his network of contacts.

These letters show that the two men were extremely close friends in adulthood and Boyse was often humorous and engaging in his letters to his friend. In 1679 – a year before Boyse’s first extant letter to Thoresby – both men were at an important point in their lives. Boyse was about to become a dissenting minister; Thoresby was becoming more involved in his local dissenting congregation, was in mourning for his father who died that year, and was beginning his career as a businessman and as a prominent figure in provincial scholarship. In a later letter to Thoresby in 1697, Boyse looked back over this early period of his life. He reveals his early education as a dissenting minister at various academies, including one run by Richard Frankland in Kendal:

You know I had never the honour of any residence at our public Universities, having been only three years under Mr Frankland’s care, and about two under Mr Veal’s at London. My first essays in preaching were for three quarters of a year with the worthy Mr French, at Sir Thomas Roberts’s in Kent. I then spent three quarters of a year more in the Countess of Donegal’s family in London.⁷

It was the post in Kent which prompted Boyse to ask Thoresby for financial help in 1680. Boyse explained that he had been chosen to be an assistant to a minister there:

I am daily expecting to be somewhere disposed of. I am desired to be an assistant to a worthy minister in Kent, that is now unfit to preach twice a day; which if I comply with, I shall have need to have some furniture of books, and being altogether unwilling to put my father to any further charges, and my brother being not in a capacity at present, I made bold to request you, if you could conveniently, to entrust me with a small sum for that purpose, till I am (by what encouragement I shall have) in a capacity to discharge it ... You may possibly wonder I make this request, particularly to yourself; but that I have done, as for several other reasons, so especially from a peculiar confidence in your goodness.⁸

The close friendship between both men is displayed here and it was with Thoresby’s help that Boyse was able to purchase books to pursue his life as a preacher. Thoresby records at the bottom of the letter that he gave £10 to Boyse and was repaid.

⁷ Joseph Boyse to Ralph Thoresby (Dublin, June 1697), Yorkshire Archaeological Society [hereafter YAS], Thoresby MSS, MS 12.

⁸ Boyse to Thoresby, c. 1680 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 11).

During his travels as a Presbyterian minister, Boyse kept Thoresby informed of pressing concerns for Dissenters wherever he was situated. While at the residence of the Countess of Donegal in London, in September 1681, Boyse wrote about the conditions for Dissenters in the city. Boyse told Thoresby that six Commissioners had been appointed to safeguard the status of the Church of England and, while it was not understood what their plans were, it was suspected that the suppression of Dissenters was intended.⁹ The background to this was the Exclusion Crisis – the attempt to exclude the future James II from the throne. There had been some relief for Dissenters between 1679 and 1681. Indeed, up to March 1681, it was the Catholics who were targeted. But with more Dissenter MPs elected they threw their weight behind the Earl of Shaftesbury's campaign of exclusion. The failure of this movement in 1681 brought Tory revenge. The period from 1681 to 1686 was particularly harsh for Dissenters: their ministers and the laity were fined, and there was also the possibility of imprisonment. Between 1682 and 1686, 3800 people were brought before the courts for attending conventicles in London alone.¹⁰

Throughout late 1681 Boyse kept Thoresby up to date with events in London. In a letter written in October 1681, Boyse reported that Dissenters were relatively free from harassment at that time, though it was not known how long this lull would last. He also remarked that his former teacher Mr Veal, among other dissenting ministers, had been called to a Court of Justices to take the oath of allegiance and the oath of supremacy and was warned not to preach again.¹¹ By November 1681 Boyse was reporting from the Sessions on Lord Shaftesbury's indictment for treason, which was thrown out by a Whig jury. Boyse noted that 'great was the applause on their verdict'.¹²

Despite these events in London and the possibility of a crackdown on dissenting Protestants, Boyse stayed in London. This may have been due to limited opportunities more than to a confident feeling of safety, because, when the opportunity arose to move to Amsterdam the following year, Boyse decided to relocate. In March 1682, Boyse wrote to Thoresby from London telling him of his decision to go to Amsterdam to replace a minister, asking him to pass on this message to his father in Leeds. He explained:

I was willing to comply with an invitation to go into Holland, to reside there, only for a quarter of a year. The occasion is, one Mr Gouge desiring to see his friends here, proposed to any that would supply his place during that time, the defray of the charges of passage, and their board in Amsterdam ... it is the

⁹ Boyse to Thoresby, 1 Sept. 1681 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 11).

¹⁰ On the Exclusion crisis, see T. Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London, 2005), pp. 136–202.

¹¹ Boyse to Thoresby, Aug/1 Oct. 1681 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 11). Both months listed on MS.

¹² Boyse to Thoresby, 24 Nov. 1681 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 11).

gratifying my curiosity, rather than any other advantage, that is my greatest inducement to undertake the journey.¹³

Further letters from Boyse tell of his first impressions of the place:

I have been at Amsterdam these two months or more, and see no occasion to repent my coming hither, either for want of courteous reception as to myself, nor I hope of some success to my endeavours in my Master's service; and though my undertaking sits heavy on my week [*sic*] shoulders, I hope it will only be an occasion to harden me in the service.¹⁴

Boyse felt that his own mission as a minister was enhanced by his visit to the city, though he did have reservations about the liberal atmosphere there. By 1680 Amsterdam was one of the largest urban centres in Europe with upwards of 200,000 inhabitants. As he observed:

For their church affairs, that one unhappy principle of the Lord's-day being no divine institution, does occasion great liberty as to the observation of it, and it is easy to conjecture what the consequences of that will always be. And the ministers that are of that opinion, being chiefly encouraged in the cities by the magistrates, does more spread the ill influence it has upon the licentiousness of the people.¹⁵

While Boyse had reservations about the attitudes towards religious observance in Amsterdam, he was reminded, too, about the suffering of Protestants who lived in less tolerant areas. News of the sufferings of the Huguenots in France was filtering through to Amsterdam by June 1682. In the region of Poitou, soldiers were being quartered on the Protestant population unless they conformed, and the emigration of many Protestant families was a result of continuing oppression. Of the situation Boyse commented:

We hear continual complaints of the great severity used against the poor Protestants, those especially Poictou, where the Intendant Marillac a mercenary wretch the priests employ, does use great barbarity. The last Declaration was to forbid going out of the kingdom, or selling their lands.¹⁶

In later years Boyse reminisced in his letters to Thoresby about that period of his life in Europe. Boyse said of his time in Amsterdam in the early 1680s that he had accepted a post amongst the adherents of Robert Browne, a sixteenth-century

¹³ Boyse to Thoresby, 21 Mar. 1682 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 11).

¹⁴ Boyse to Thoresby, 29 June 1682 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 11).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

English separatist whose followers, led by Robert Harrison, had settled in the Netherlands in the early 1580s. He regarded this posting as demonstrating the generosity of spirit between Dissenters of differing beliefs:

I preached in what they call the Brownist Church, and had the unusual hap, though a known Presbyterian, to be kindly treated by a congregation of very sour Independents. I thence came into Yorkshire, and was thence frighted (you know how) into a compliance with an unexpected invitation to Ireland, September A.D. 1683, where I was ordained to Wood-Street congregation the February following, 83–84, and have since continued my ministry there now these twelve years.¹⁷

After Amsterdam, Boyse found his mission took him to Dublin. This decision was likely to have been influenced by the increasing problems Dissenters experienced in England between 1681 and 1686. Another factor was that Boyse had family connections in Dublin. His sister Hannah had married in Leeds but then had moved with her husband to Ireland; Boyse christened her son, Edward, in St Catherine's Church on Thomas Street on 17 October 1680. Boyse wrote to his father shortly after coming to Ireland acknowledging that he was fortunate that providence had directed him towards Ireland and stated that it provided him with 'the capacity and freedom' of serving the Lord which he would have had little hope of if he had stayed in England. He hoped to find refuge from the storm in Ireland.¹⁸ The transnational nature of dissent was evident to both men in this letter, for Boyse told his father:

If I hear not shortly from Mr Thoresby, I think to give him the trouble of a letter and, if I can, get him one or two of the inscriptions he desired. My respect to Joseph Milner but tell him I miss my Psalm book. Here is one Mary Briggam, an ancient widow that enquired out my lodgings to ask of you. She says she was one of the members at Rowley; she gives her respects.¹⁹

One of Matthew Boyse's congregation members at Rowley in New England had sought out his son in Dublin to send her greetings.

Despite some structural similarities, Ireland created a new challenge for Boyse. During Wood Street's early history the Independent preacher John Owen had preached there in the 1640s. By the 1650s, Boyse's religious educator Edward Veal had joined the congregation and, in the 1660s, Independency gave way to English Presbyterianism. In 1683, Boyse was appointed to work alongside another minister at Wood Street, Daniel Williams. He was replacing Timothy Halliday who had died in August 1682.

¹⁷ Boyse to Thoresby, June 1697 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 12).

¹⁸ Joseph Boyse to Matthew Boyse, 2 Feb. 1684 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

¹⁹ Ibid.

On his arrival to Dublin, Boyse took lodgings at Mr Francis Wooley's at the 'Leg' in Essex Street and it was from there that he sent a letter to Thoresby concerning the disposal of Halliday's goods and effects. Boyse knew that his father would have contact with Halliday's mother who lived in Leeds and that arrangements could be put in place through him. This highlights the emotional connections that underpinned Presbyterian affiliation. Boyse wrote to Thoresby on 8 October 1683 asking him to inform his father about his situation, and he debated whether to send for the rest of his belongings:

I must further request you (for you see what you must expect by keeping so troublesome correspondence) to give my duty to father, and tell him, that if I continue here, I shall have occasion to send for that box of books that I have left in my chamber at Leeds ... I have not yet seen Mr Williams, though I have once or twice heard from him. If I resolve to fix, as I see nothing yet to dissuade me, I shall send for the box. I have met with more of respect and civility that I could expect among strangers, and such as will be an encouragement to stay, if our present circumstances continue, which, though not so good as they have formerly been, yet are much more safe and desirable than your's. I expect Mr Williams next week and shall then soon be able to determine.²⁰

Boyse did elect to stay in Dublin, although this letter was written late in 1683 during a period of Dissenter suppression after the Rye House Plot – the Whig plot to kill the King and the Duke of York as they returned to London after the Newmarket races. In August 1683 in Ireland, the Lord Chancellor (the Archbishop of Armagh, Michael Boyle) had noted that the government's efforts to repress conventicles there had been successful.²¹ Boyse acquainted Thoresby with the likely consequences for Dissenters in Dublin, powerfully capturing the mood in the city:

A considerable case of his [Mr Williams], relating to our liberties, will be tried this next sessions, upon which much will depend for the future ... I perceive my Lord Arran is here deputy, and the Archbishop (who is also Chancellor) said to have the chief hand in the management of affairs. For pictures of the Irish Bishops I have had no leisure yet to inquire but shall in a little time.²²

In another letter from Dublin, dated 10 May 1684, Boyse informed Thoresby about the continuing issue of dealing with Timothy Halliday's personal effects:

I suppose Mrs Halliday sometimes calls at my father's: desire him to tell her, 'I have done what I can for her son's books'. Mr Williams and I have bought some

²⁰ Boyse to Thoresby, 8 Oct. 1683 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

²¹ R.L. Greaves, *God's Other Children: Protestant Nonconformists and the Emergence of Denominational Churches in Ireland, 1660–1700* (Stanford, CA, 1997), pp. 129–30.

²² Boyse to Thoresby, 8 Oct. 1683 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

part of them, but the most of them being old, and not very considerable, I fear will stick long on my hands; there has been 25*l* disbursed for the charges of his funeral etc. ... his clothes will, I suppose, be sent home, for I scarce think we can sell them here for any purpose.²³

In addition to tying up the loose ends involved with his replacement of Halliday, Boyse noted in this letter that he was being kept informed of events affecting Dissenters in England by an acquaintance there who was also a member of the Established Church:

By Mr Ashurst I hear you are transplanted into Dublin and become an Irish apostle. But how happy soever you are there your friends here seem to be in another condition; schism and Whiggism are no longer rampant; the conventicling houses are no more in use but as empty as the heads or sermons of those that formerly preached in them. There are at most but a few sucking meetings of about thirty or forty and it is odd but one or two of them is taken every Sunday and the offenders prosecuted for routs or riots. Some have had their understandings opened by the breaking of their doors and seizing their goods hath wrought more convictions than all our priests. Our churches are thronged and crowded and there is hardly any of them but where you may find Dissenters and organs.²⁴

Boyse reacted to this comment by noting that the relative peace towards Catholics and Dissenters in Ireland meant that both groups had more time and energy for internal disputes than their more harried English counterparts. He added:

since none here are so severe either to the Catholics or Dissenters they find it hard to agree among themselves; for a bill in Chancery was lately preferred against a Scotch minister in town by some not long since his hearers about some money collected for a widow which they pretend he never paid her.²⁵

The lack of extreme antagonism towards Dissenters externally in Ireland meant that there was less cohesion within dissenting religious groups such as the English Presbyterians. As well as reporting on dissenter issues, Boyse compared social and economic conditions in Ireland in the 1680s with those in England:

I have not travelled far enough into the country to give you any account of it. Of the towns here in Leinster (excepting those that are cittys or county-towns which are not equall to most of our country markt towns) I can give you no better description than that they are made up of a castle with a few cabins surrounding

²³ Boyse to Thoresby, 10 May 1684 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

it. The master of the former almost everywhere an English gent; the inhabitants of the latter most Irish whose livelihood do's almost wholly depend on a cowe and potato-bed. The castles (mostly ruin'd) are so numerous that one would think the people formerly liv'd in Hobb's state of warr no man of estate thinking himself secure that had not a castle over his head.²⁶

Thoresby was keen to gain information of monuments and Boyse tried to oblige on this matter, even though he had to admit that his eyesight was failing and that he found it hard to read the inscriptions Thoresby so coveted.²⁷

By 1693 Boyse received an invitation to return permanently to Leeds, for Thoresby wrote asking him to consider becoming minister at Mill Hill Chapel; the previous minister, Reverend Thomas Sharp, had died in August 1692. Boyse's humorous and self-deprecating reply gives an indication of how much he had come to enjoy his Irish ministry and reveals a marked reluctance to leave his post in Dublin:

I heartily thank you for your good opinion of mee, which must be farr above what I deserve, when you propose such a thing to mee as succeeding so excellent a person as Mr Sharp: but I must peremptorily desire you to suppress any further mention of it, for the reasons I shall now subjoyn. I am here fix't with a people to whom I am link't by affection and obligation, – I could not so much as come over without acquainting 'em with the design of it, and this would be downright murder. Besides, here I am sure my labours have found undeserved acceptance and some success ... I have no ground to expect it elsewhere. My way of preaching was never yet lik't by any till they were habituated to it, and if I should come over to be rejected I should buy the experiment of a change very dear.²⁸

It was not just the possibility of being rejected in Leeds, however, which caused him to demur. Boyse was adamant that his work at Wood Street allowed him to best use his skills as a minister in the care of that community and he jokingly admitted that they would resist his disappearance:

But to tell you the main reason, I have no prospect of doing that service anywhere else that I have here. My generall acquaintance and conversation, the joynt care of our young candidates with the rest of the ministers here, and many other circumstances give me that opportunity of usefulness here which I cannot propose elsewhere. And indeed, should I attempt a removall, I must resist downright force and violence, for little less would be used by my friends here.²⁹

²⁶ Boyse to Thoresby, 20 Sept. 1684 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Boyse to Thoresby, 11 Jan. 1694 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

²⁹ Ibid.

This sense of mission was not just played out within the Presbyterian community of Dublin, for Boyse was soon to avail himself of the burgeoning Irish print-culture after the Glorious Revolution to express his sense of faith to a wider audience. In particular, Boyse composed a series of works which petitioned for the Anglican State to tolerate the Protestant dissenting communities in a context where he thought Quakerism and Catholicism rather than dissenting Protestantism were the key threats. The legal situation for Dissenters was ambiguous. Since 1660, with the failure of the Presbyterians to accommodate to the Church of Ireland, they had become an illegal sect. There was *de facto* toleration and, compared to the situation in England with the Conventicle acts, little persecution. Yet it was not all plain sailing and Boyse, through his writings, hoped to negotiate relief for Presbyterians in Ireland and England. In the letter in which he rejected Thoresby's invitation to succeed Sharp, Boyse further remarked on his ongoing battle with William King:

I fear I am like to have some new and unpleasant work cutt out, for Dr. King, now Bishop of Derry, has newly publish't a Discourse concerning the Inventions of Men in the worship of God, from the charg[e] whereof he endeavours to clear the Establish't Church, retorting it with great severity on the Dissenters, especially those of his own Diocese, to whom in the conclusion hee particularly addresses himself, both ministers and people: and in that address he advises 'em to warn the people against the Independent principles layd down.³⁰

Boyse then lists prominent dissenting ministers – including himself – named by King, adding that 'The answering the book belongs to the Ministers in the North but I reckon a postscript will be expected from mee, so farr as I am concern'd'.³¹ Boyse's importance within Presbyterianism, both north and south, is evident from this letter as his theological experience and sense of Presbyterianism's place within the wider framework of Protestantism unified the different Presbyterian traditions.

In pursuit of this accommodation with the State and the State Church, Boyse was willing to collaborate with Church of Ireland ministers. He joined forces against Catholicism by writing a preface to Archdeacon Moore's three treatises against transubstantiation, the invocation of saints and image worship – a task completed at Moore's request.³² This preface was based on a sermon preached by Boyse on 23 October 1706 (the anniversary of the massacre of Protestants during the Ulster uprising of 1641), and the text centred on 'the pretended Infallibility of the Catholic Church'.³³ Boyse sent a copy to Thoresby, but lamented that the

³⁰ Boyse to Thoresby, 11 Jan. 1694 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 6).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Boyse to Thoresby, 22 Sept. 1707 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 12).

³³ Ibid.

publication of the preface was taking up too much of his time thereby delaying the publication of his two volumes of collected sermons.³⁴

Again, with more sympathetic counterparts in Anglicanism, Boyse found support for his criticism of the one dissenting group that he did not find common ground with – the Quakers. In one letter dated 27 March 1707, Boyse enclosed for Thoresby a small tract against the Quakers which comprised of queries drawn up by a Church of Ireland clergyman. Boyse was then helping the clergyman to edit the tract, remarking:

he having left me an absolute power to model them as I pleased, I have almost entirely new moulded them, and they lay open, I think, a true scheme of the most refined Quakerism. The Quakers are alarmed by it, but have not yet answered them.³⁵

Boyse saw himself as a religious moderate: ready to defend Presbyterian principles in print against blows from members of the Established Church yet also ready to join forces with sympathetic Anglicans against Catholicism. His moderation is also shown in his refusal to accept Quakers as part of the dissenting spectrum: their religious views were too extreme for him. This would be later evinced in his dealings with Thomas Emlyn, a colleague at Wood Street who had also been a minister with the Countess of Donegall.

Boyse's nephew, Thomas Jackson, had sent sermons by Emlyn to Thoresby with the intention of keeping Thoresby in touch with dissenting religious life in Dublin.³⁶ However, at one of Emlyn's sermons in Dublin a member of Wood Street congregation noted that he was omitting certain doctrinal orthodoxies such as the divinity of Christ, which called into question his belief in the Trinity. When questioned on this by Boyse, Emlyn admitted that this was his position. This started the process of his case being brought before a group of Dublin ministers from Independent and Presbyterian traditions. Though Emlyn was dismissed and left for London the incident showed Boyse's moderation in theological matters.³⁷ These

³⁴ Boyse to Thoresby, 22 Sept. 1707 (YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 12).

³⁵ 'Letter from Joseph Boyse to Ralph Thoresby, Dublin 27 March 1707', in *Letters of Eminent Men Addressed to Ralph Thoresby* (2 vols, London, 1832), 2, p. 50.

³⁶ 'Letter from Thomas Jackson to Ralph Thoresby, March 1698/99', in W.T. Lancaster (ed.), 'Letters to Ralph Thoresby', in *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 21 (1912), p. 72. Thomas Jackson was Boyse's nephew and a divinity student. He corresponded with Thoresby, often including research on artefacts and inscriptions about which Thoresby had enquired.

³⁷ On Joseph Boyse and Thomas Emlyn, see M. Brown, *Francis Hutcheson in Dublin, 1719–1730* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 81–3. Boyse's moderation was also evident in his contributions to the Non-Subscription controversy within Presbyterianism. The debate, which focused around the doctrine of free will, saw a split within the ranks of the church – the subscribers insisting that ministers sign up to the Westminster Confession of Faith,

letters flesh out our knowledge of Boyse's dealings as a moderate Presbyterian seeking to maintain connections with other religious groups as well as his own brotherhood over geographical distance – a dissenting diaspora.

Thoresby's failure to snare Boyse for the post of minister at Mill Hill in 1693 may have contributed to him returning to the Established Church. After Boyse's refusal, Thoresby persuaded Timothy Manlove to take the post instead. Even so, Manlove soon complained that the stipend was not large enough and he also objected to Thoresby's practice of sometimes attending the parish church – that is, conforming. It was Thoresby's disagreement with Manlove which edged Thoresby towards becoming completely conformist. Boyse wrote to Thoresby in 1697 saying that he was 'very sorry to perceive there is any misunderstanding between him [Manlove] and you'.³⁸ By 1699, Thoresby had abandoned his connection with Dissenters, transferring to the Church of England, largely due to the ministry of a gifted Church of England minister, John Killingbeck.

As with Boyse's brief connection with the Brownists in Amsterdam, this episode of Ralph Thoresby's falling out with Timothy Manlove and his conformity to the Established Church highlights how permeable definitions of dissent were; they often depended on circumstance and personal friendships. Thoresby clearly felt a theological connection with the ministry of John Killingbeck, but his friendship with Boyse did not falter during this period. Nor did his concern for the welfare of Dissenters, for Thoresby recorded in his diary in the spring of 1699 that:

The Learned Mr Boyse being come from Dublin to this his native place, lodged at my house till his marriage with Mrs Rachel Ibbetson. The sermon he preached relating to the sufferings of the French Protestants was very moving there being once about eight hundred churches in which the true worship of God was constantly celebrated which are now demolished one thousand five hundred pastors banished, their flocks scattered and many thousand families forced into exile etc for whose relief public collections are being made.³⁹

Indeed, their correspondence continued into the early eighteenth century with Boyse keeping Thoresby up to date with the position and experiences of Dissenters in Ireland. Thoresby's will, drawn up in December 1700, confirms his acceptance of the Church of England together with his desire for his children to remain within its fold – especially under the guidance of John Killingbeck, whose ministry he

which asserted dual predestination. While Boyse avoided taking a stand on the issue itself, he worked hard to ease tempers and create an open dialogue and compromise between the two factions. See I.R. McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 41–61.

³⁸ Boyse to Thoresby (Dublin, 29 May 1697), YAS, Thoresby MSS, MS 7.

³⁹ J. Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, FRS*. (2 vols, London, 1830), 1, pp. 328–9.

urged them to attend. Nonetheless, he will also stated that Thoresby expected his children to share his concern for nonconformist groups:

I would have them always to express a tender regard of and charity to other reformed churches beyond sea and particular societys nearer hand as part of Christ's Catholick Church yet as to their own practises it is my express will and desire that they be conformable to the National Church of which I profess myself a sincere member.⁴⁰

What these letters show first is the international nature of non-conformity in the seventeenth century: the travels of Boyse from England to the Netherlands and Ireland. The United Provinces was noted for its religious toleration and had long attracted radical believers from England. Hence Boyse's interaction with the Brownists in Amsterdam demonstrated that strands of separatism from England could be tolerated in a foreign land. While the tolerant milieu permitted radical religious groups to flourish Boyse's letters show his unease with the spiritual laxity in the city. Religious radicalism needs tolerance to prosper but, when tolerance is found, it usually implies a variety of opposing belief systems.

The religious context in Ireland was different – the massacre of Protestants in 1641 during the rebellion of the Roman Catholics, under both native Irish and Old English leaders, had left deep political and religious scars. Unlike the United Provinces, there was no easy toleration of religious belief systems that stood apart from the Established Church, either Catholic or Dissenter. Boyse's letters show that Presbyterians sought to gain ground in Ireland, a place where he believed the countryside could be described as being close to Hobbes's state of war.

Secondly, the letters display the interaction of friends, information and ministries because both Joseph Boyse and Ralph Thoresby informed one another about family members, their personal lives and their environments. The letters intimately show the personal relationship between two Dissenters who had religious, family and personal interests in common – a relationship which survived despite transnational migration and Thoresby's change of religious affiliation. Personal ties, forged in the midst of religious radicalism, could endure even when one party became orthodox.

Thirdly, these letters, in terms of Boyse's life, illuminate some of the practical and political concerns of being a Presbyterian minister in this context. Having once asserted themselves as an alternative to the Church of England, Presbyterians in Boyse's day had to argue for toleration for those who dissented from orthodoxy. However, this toleration was not intended to be universal and could be quite limited: hence Boyse's pamphlets set out his opposition to Roman Catholics and

⁴⁰ Will of Ralph Thoresby, 3 Dec. 1700 (YAS, Letters and papers of the Thoresby family, MS SD9).

other Dissenters like the Quakers. In addition, Boyse's letters to Thoresby show his commitment to educating his congregation and his ministers, even declining the opportunity to take up a ministry at his birthplace Leeds because of his dedication to his post in Ireland.

In these letters and throughout his long friendship with Thoresby, Boyse showed himself to be a religious moderate – albeit one whose dissent from the principles and practices of the Established Church ensured that his status was firmly outside what was considered to be orthodox in religious terms. His ministry and correspondence raise the question of defining dissent and radicalism in the late seventeenth century. According to Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith, the period from 1689 to 1770 was 'not distinguished by widespread "radical" activity', though it can be argued that people during this period referred to radicalism in both politics and religion from the past.⁴¹ Boyse's enthusiastic sermons commemorating the events of 1641, a time of suffering for both denominations, served to ally Presbyterians more closely to their fellow Protestants and recalled a time when political radicalism moved against Protestant religion and rule – the sense of 'a continuity of national religious experience' to which Morton and Smith refer.⁴² The letters from Boyse to Thoresby, however, show how two Dissenters share a continuity of religious experience (both were Dissenters until Thoresby's conversion to the State Church in 1699) in both national context and international contexts. Their shared familial connections, mutual support and friendship helped to further their roles as agents of dissent and were strong enough to survive even when Thoresby joined the fold of the Established Church.

⁴¹ Morton and Smith (eds), *Radicalism in British Literary Culture*, p. 2.

⁴² Ibid.



Chapter 11

The Books and Times of Anthony Collins (1676–1729), Free-thinker, Radical Reader and Independent Whig

Giovanni Tarantino

The Radical Enlightenment and Book-collecting: Case Study

‘The warning ... against drawing too many inferences from a library catalogue bears repeating’, Richard Ashcraft wrote in a note about the publication of the Locke catalogue, ‘but the fact remains that what a man buys for his edification cannot be dismissed out of hand as being unimportant.’¹ Whilst working on my edition of Anthony Collins’ manuscript library catalogue and following a thorough rereading of his works,² I have become convinced that the radical seeds of his philosophical thought and political leanings, in so far as they can be identified, lie in his strenuous anti-authoritarianism, his use of satire, the political corollaries of his moral determinism, his insistence on the primacy of Law and the importance of grassroots control of political power, and – to use an old, even controversial category coined by Arthur Lovejoy – in his ‘intellectual equalitarianism’.³ Shaftesbury, and before him Richard Overton (and even further back, the authors of the Marprelate Tracts), had resorted to satire in order to express their criticism of the clerical presumption of infallibility, ‘the method eventually becoming the principal weapon employed to discredit Christian miracles’.⁴ In *A Discourse concerning Ridicule and Irony* (1729), Collins argues that the use of

¹ R. Ashcraft, ‘John Locke’s Library: Portrait of an Intellectual’, in J.S. Yolton (ed.), *A Locke Miscellany: Locke Biography and Criticism for All* (Bristol, 1990), p. 245.

² G. Tarantino, *Lo scrittoio di Anthony Collins (1676–1729): i libri e i tempi di un libero pensatore* (Milan, 2007). It should be pointed out that my edition makes no attempt to offer a philological reconstruction of the manuscript text. The main aim was to arrive at a definitive identification of titles and authors.

³ A.O. Lovejoy, ‘The Parallel of Deism and Classicism’, *Modern Philology*, 29 (1932): p. 287.

⁴ J. Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Scepticism, 1680–1750* (Columbia, SC, 1997), p. 54. See also Sammy Basu, ‘“Woe into you that laugh now!”: Humour and Toleration in Overton and Shaftesbury’, in J.C. Laursen (ed.), *Religious Toleration: ‘The Variety of Rites’ from Cyrus to Defoe* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 147–72.

debunking irony, which wisely presupposes the fallibility of any opinion, is a healthy antidote to the long-faced seriousness of the many custodians of the truth. The free thinker will only ‘sacrifice the privilege of irony’ when he is guaranteed freedom of expression.⁵

According to Jonathan Israel, ‘the Radical Enlightenment, whether on an atheistic or deistic basis, rejected all compromise with the past and sought to sweep away existing structures entirely, ... refusing to accept that there is any God-ordained social hierarchy, concentration of privilege or land-ownership in noble hands, or religious sanction for monarchy’.⁶ Anthony Collins (1676–1729) was a leading exponent of the ‘Radical Enlightenment’, a philosophical necessitarian,⁷ and a renowned bibliophile. When he died his library – the third largest private library in Britain – contained more than 10,000 titles. By identifying and analysing the significant connections between Collins the prolific writer and Collins the untiring reader, it is possible to chart his brilliant and irreverent use of the weighty traditions of ‘orthodox’ thought, his direct involvement in an uncompromising journalistic campaign to moralise political life and his unflagging denunciation of the abuse of popular credulity by the ecclesiastical authorities:

I own my self no less inclined to scepticism in history than in speculations, and see reason to distrust the historical relations and testimonies of uninspired men, as well as observe the universal sophistry and false reasoning, which prevail in common conversation, harangues and books.⁸

Collins’ library was also a focus for learned socialising; invitations were greatly coveted and the host would order in fine wines to accompany the presentation of new books.⁹ Adding to his collection naturally required constant correspondence with writers, reviewers, editors, book-sellers and shippers. Anne Goldgar has explained very clearly how these transactions were central to the establishment of intellectual networks and communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth

⁵ *A Discourse concerning Ridicule and Irony in Writing, in A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Nathaniel Marshall* (London, 1729), p. 25. See D. Berman, ‘Anthony Collins: Aspects of his Thought and Writings’, *Hermathena*, 119 (1975): pp. 64–8; [Thomas Stackhouse], *The Life of Mr. Woolston* (London, 1733), p. 21.

⁶ J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 11–12.

⁷ See J. Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity: The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy* (Oxford, 2005), p. 8: ‘There is no threat to freedom from the “natural” necessitation of choices by motives, since liberty is simply a matter of not being prevented from acting in line with the most pressing motive’.

⁸ [Anthony Collins], *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London, 1724), p. vi.

⁹ BL, Add. MSS. 4282, fols 145v, 146r, 176r, 224r, 228r.

centuries.¹⁰ Scholars would congregate in libraries not only to read and discuss new books or different methods of study, but on occasion also to write, sometimes together. Building a library, even just reading and making marginal annotations, was ‘a collective act’.¹¹

Collins was born on 21 June 1676 in Isleworth, Middlesex, to the west of London. His father Henry, a lawyer, appears to have been an Anglican. Richard Bentley insinuated that Collins’ mother, Mary Dineley, was a Catholic and that she brought up her child accordingly.¹² The source, however, is suspect and perhaps betrays a slanderous intent. The Collins family was financially well-to-do and able to give him an education at Eton and then at King’s College in Cambridge (1693–96), though he left before graduating. His tutor at Cambridge was the theologian Francis Hare, later Bishop of Chichester, and the author of *The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of Scripture* (1714). Following a family tradition, Collins commenced legal training at the Temple in London, though he never practised law and indeed never really needed to apply himself to any profession. Much of his ‘largely uneventful’ life was spent in rural Essex,¹³ where he devoted himself primarily to his intellectual pursuits, to managing his vast estates (more than 20,000 acres) and to administering local justice in the surrounding area, deeming the role of a ‘gentleman’ to be that of dedicating oneself disinterestedly to the life of the community.¹⁴

Two journeys to the Spanish Netherlands and United Provinces, during which he spent most of his time anxiously hunting for rare books and manuscripts, reflect, together with his library catalogue, an inexhaustible curiosity about the world and his avid interest in reading. The works he wrote between 1707 and 1717 were mainly philosophical, while the writings published between 1720 and 1729 were mostly historical and philological. The public offices he occupied explain why, when intervening in the theological, philosophical and political controversies of his age, as he did repeatedly, he not only resorted to the flimsy shield of anonymity

¹⁰ A. Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, 1995).

¹¹ J. Champion, ‘Enlightened Erudition and the Politics of Reading in John Toland’s Circle’, *HJ*, 49 (2006): pp. 119–20.

¹² *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking: in a Letter to F.H. D.D. by Phileleutherus Lipsiensis* (London, 1713), p. xiii, in *The Works of Richard Bentley*, (ed.) A. Dyce (3 vols, London, 1836–38), 3, p. 314.

¹³ D. Berman, ‘Anthony Collins (1676–1729)’, in *The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century British Philosophers*, (ed.) J. Yolton, J.V. Price and J. Stephens (2 vols, Bristol, 1999).

¹⁴ See BL, Add. MS 4221, fol. 329, Add. MS 4282, fols 240–44, Add. MS 4313, fols 71–3, MS Stowe 750, f. 441; J. O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins: The Man and His Works* (The Hague, 1970), pp. 1–22, 224–41; J. Dybikowski, ‘Anthony Collins’, *ODNB*.

but also adopted communicative strategies – reticence, insinuation, deliberately weak argumentation – that served to dissimulate his views. A law passed by William III (9 & 10 William III c. 32) stated that anyone daring to question the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity or the supernatural nature of Christianity was to be stripped of all public offices – civic, ecclesiastic or military. In 1698, Collins married Martha Child, the daughter of Lord Francis Child, a banker, who also became Mayor of London in that same year. They had four children, though only two daughters survived to adulthood. Martha died in 1703, leaving Collins to look after three children. In the same year Collins met John Locke. They immediately began corresponding and continued to do so until the death of Locke, who reiterated his respect and affection for Collins on various occasions. In a letter dated 3 April 1704, he credited Collins with having understood his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* better than anyone else. In the same year, John Toland dedicated his translation of Aesop's *Fables* to Collins, and did likewise in 1709 for *Adeisidaemon*.¹⁵ In fact, 'Collins seems to have been friendly with most of the prominent free-thinkers of his time. ... One suspects that British free-thinkers, in the first half of the eighteenth century, formed a more closely knit group than is generally thought.'¹⁶ A letter to Henry Dodwell on 17 October 1706 reveals an early determination on Collins' part to advocate tolerance and the freedoms of opinion and of the press:

I think ye clergy have not a judical power either in absolution or excommunication and am for toleration in matters of mere religion. ... I am for ye Liberty of ye Press.¹⁷

Between 1707 and 1708 Collins engaged in a lively dispute with Samuel Clarke in which he sustained the anti-theist theses of materiality and of the mortality of the soul.¹⁸ One of the most assiduous frequenters of the Grecian Coffee House, '[that] glorious club of heroes whose name will be held in honour by all who abhor

¹⁵ St.H. Daniel, *John Toland: His Methods, Manners, and Mind* (Montreal, 1984), p. 33.

¹⁶ D. Berman, 'Deism, Immortality, and the Art of Theological Lying', in J.A.L. Lemay (ed.), *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment: Essays Honouring Alfred Owen Aldridge* (Newark, DE, 1987), p. 68.

¹⁷ St Edmund Hall, Oxford, MS 12, 'Collins to Henry Dodwell the elder' (17 October 1706). Cf. Anthony Collins, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Rogers, on occasion of his Eight Sermons, concerning the Necessity of Divine Revelation* (London, 1727), p. 2: 'I was always of opinion, that *Toleration* or *Liberty of Conscience* in matters of mere Religion, was the way of Knowledge and *Truth*, the way of good Neighbourhood, and Peace, and Order, and the way of Wealth and Strength in Society'.

¹⁸ See S. Landucci, 'Mente e corpo nel dibattito fra Collins e Clarke', in A. Santucci (ed.), *L'Età dei Lumi. Saggi sulla cultura settecentesca* (Bologna, 1998), pp. 126–42.

Christianity',¹⁹ Collins soon became known for his decidedly heterodox religious opinions, and not only in London. During a trip to the United Provinces in 1711 he had met Jean Le Clerc, the Quaker merchant Benjamin Furly and Eugene, Prince of Savoy. He returned to the Dutch Republic three years later, while controversy was raging in London about his new book, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*, which was to prove a great success. In it, he vigorously upheld the claim that freedom of thought is an inalienable human right.

I could proceed to give an account how [the Priests] dispute about ... every point in the whole Christian Religion, as well as about the Meaning of almost every text in the Bible: But what I have produc'd being sufficient to prove their divisions about the meaning of the Scripture in matters of the greatest importance, I may just conclude that it is necessary for every Man, instead of relying upon them, to think freely for himself.²⁰

In The Hague, Collins gathered together a circle of free thinkers at the premises of the English bookseller and publisher Thomas Johnson. They were favourably impressed by his work. Later he went to Flanders, where he was given a respectful welcome. He also had plans to go to France and Italy, but news of the death of a friend led him to return home early. In the meantime he had made agreements for the supply of books with the French booksellers Pierre Dunoyer and Paul Vaillant in London. He also enjoyed the hardworking collaboration of the printer Robinson, who sold the *Discourse of Free-Thinking* at his shop at the 'Golden Lion' near St Paul's Cathedral. For books from Holland he generally turned to Johnson, who forwarded them to the London publisher James Woodman. In Amsterdam, Mortier found books for him through the mediation of the bookseller Cailloné, a Huguenot exile in London. And in France he could rely on the instincts and alacrity of Pierre Desmaizeaux.

In 1718, Collins was elected Treasurer of the County of Essex, where he was already serving as a Justice of the Peace and Commissioner of Taxes.²¹ In 1724 he remarried, his second wife Elizabeth (d. 1737) being a daughter of Sir Walter Wrottesley. The last five years of Collins' life were, however, rather troubled: he was afflicted by painful kidney stones, which were ultimately the cause of his death, and suffered greatly as a result of the premature death of one of his children in 1723. Despite everything, he continued to cultivate his interest in biblical criticism and exegesis, also involving friends and readers. The Viscount of Barrington reported that it was customary, after dinner, for Collins and his guests 'to have ye Greek Testament laid upon the table as they were all men of letters, and

¹⁹ John Witty, *The First Principles of Modern Deism Confuted* (London, 1707), p. xvi.

²⁰ [Anthony Collins], *A Discourse of Free-Thinking, Occasion'd by the Rise and Growth of a Sect Call'd Free-Thinkers* (London, 1713), p. 76.

²¹ BL, Add. MS 4282, fol. 228r.

had a taste for scriptural criticism'.²² Amongst the lost works of those years, it is worth mentioning the annotated translations of Cicero's *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*.²³ Of the two works published in the year of his death and traditionally ascribed to Collins, *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity* (1729) and *A Discourse concerning Ridicule and Irony* (1729), only the latter can be attributed to Collins with reasonable certainty.²⁴ Collins died on 13 December 1729 at his London home in Harley Street. He was buried 'in a new vault belonging to that family in the new burying ground belonging to St. George's ... it being his particular desire not to be buried in any church'.²⁵ The Parish Church of Saint George – 'the London Temple of Hymen' in Hanover Square – had been designed by John James and consecrated on 13 March 1725 by the Bishop of London, Edmund Gibson. Many of Collins' manuscripts were entrusted upon his death to Desmaizeaux, who sold them to his widow. She subsequently lent them to Gibson, who, it seems, destroyed them, an outcome that was greatly regretted by Desmaizeaux as he felt he had been indirectly responsible.²⁶

By May 1718 Collins had found the definitive and best location for his library, in Baddow Hall. Collins was very satisfied, as he immediately informed Desmaizeaux, his most assiduous and learned literary informant: 'My books are all in order, in a very commodious room above stairs'.²⁷ According to Thomas Birch, who wrote the earliest extended account of Collins's life and works:

His Library, which was a very large and curious one, was open to all Men of Letters, to whom he readily communicated all the lights and assistance in his power, and even furnished his antagonists with books to confute himself, and

²² O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, p. 228.

²³ [Collins], *Historical and Critical Essay*, p. 279; BL, Add. MS 4282, fols 184r, 206r.

²⁴ D. Berman, 'Anthony Collins: Aspects of His Thought and Writings', *Hermathena*, 99 (1975): pp. 64–8. See also Jacopo Agnesina, 'Sur l'attribution à Anthony Collins du *Discourse concerning Ridicule and Irony in Writing*', *La Lettre Clandestine*, 17 (2009): pp. 277–89.

²⁵ *The Weekly Medley and Literal Journal* (Saturday, 27 December 1729).

²⁶ BL, Add. MS 4282, fol. 245r: 'January, 6th 1730 – I have done a most wicked thing. I am persuaded that I have betray'd y^e trust of a person who for 26 years has given me continued instances of his friendship and confidence. I am convinced that I have acted contrary to y^e will and intention of my dear deceas'd friend.' Elizabeth Collins would later auction off the entire collection. See BL, Add. MS 4282, ff. 252–7; I. Disraeli, 'Des Maizeaux and Anthony Collins's MSS', in *Curiosities of Literature* (3 vols, London, 1858), 3, pp. 13ff.

²⁷ Collins to Pierre Desmaizeaux, 25 May 1718 (BL, Add. MS 4282, f. 147r).

directed them how to give their arguments all the force, of which they were capable.²⁸

This striking statement conjures up a picture of someone more interested in the cause of truth than in his own cause.²⁹

In his influential monograph on Collins, the Jesuit scholar James O'Higgins stated that 'on Collins' death, in 1729, the library contained some 6906 items, and, consequently, more volumes'.³⁰ He presumably limited himself to adding together the 3,451 lots advertised for sale in the 28 days of the first auction of Collins' library (18 January–24 February 1731), the 2,222 texts in octavo formaque minori, the 821 in quarto, the 399 in folio and the 13 subscription books sold in a later auction (10 March–16 April 1731). The two auctions were held 'at St Paul's Coffee House in Paul's Church-Yard, ... beginning every Evening at Five a Clock'.³¹ The manuscript catalogue actually lists 10,801 items, including 456 titles not in the catalogue and a large number of repetitions (in that the same works are sometimes listed several times: under the name of the author; the name of each individual author in the case of collective works; the translators; the glossators; the titles; or even subject matter, in the case of biographies or legal proceedings).³² The manuscript and autograph catalogue is held in the university library of King's College, Cambridge (Keynes Ms 217, 'Bibliotheca Collinsiana'). In 1977 the catalogue was given some much-needed restoration – the pages were cleaned, the cuts and holes patched and it was rebound in leather – which has helped to preserve it in its entirety and make it more readily consultable. Two sheets of the catalogue seemed to have been removed at some stage: one between pages 531 and 532, the other between 537 and 538. The numbering of the final pages (541–64) is patchy. Collins completed his first compilation in 1720. In the following nine years, however, he expanded his library enormously, almost doubling the number of works. He noted the new titles on the even-numbered pages of the catalogue, which he had wisely left blank for later additions. He wrote in the new entries next to the authors already listed, being careful to maintain the alphabetical order wherever possible, though this is sometimes inexact and discontinuous. It is also possible to discern various abrasions and erasures, and, in some cases, possibly for reasons of space or to replace titles that had been removed, the entries of the first version are interspersed with titles published after 1720. In an appendix to the catalogue there are two jumbled lists of titles, for the most part anonymous, one on the odd-numbered pages and the other on the even-numbered ones. The works

²⁸ Thomas Birch, 'Anthony Collins', in Pierre Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (10 vols, London, 1734–41), 4, pp. 404–5.

²⁹ Cf. Berman, 'Anthony Collins: Aspects of His Thought and Writings', p. 50.

³⁰ O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, p. 24.

³¹ See Thomas Ballard, *Bibliotheca Antonij Collins, Arm.; Or, A Compleat Catalogue of the Library of Anthony Collins, Esq., deceas'd* (2 parts, London, 1731).

³² See Tarantino, *Lo scrittoio di Anthony Collins*.

by anonymous authors are followed by other clusters of titles, most of which are grouped according to the initial of the authors' names or are by the same writer. It is not clear whether these were preliminary notes for a planned reordering of the catalogue, prevented by Collins' death, or whether they were volumes he had loaned or borrowed.

For the most part, Collins' library contained works about philosophy, religion and theology. However, by no means did his interests lack eclecticism. He had an extensive collection of Greek and Latin classics, numerous historical works, treatises on political and constitutional topics, English literary classics and biographies. He also had more than forty periodicals. There were books on science, law, literature, economics, architecture, navigation, numismatics, ornithology, botany, agriculture, even the art of embalming. There was a handful of books about natural magic. Amongst the works of John Evelyn there was, unsurprisingly, his English translation of Gabriel Naudé's *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque (Instructions concerning erecting of a library)*, as well as *Fumifugium* (1661), which reported alarming medical observations about the effects of London's unhealthy air. He also had a treatise by Edward Tyson, entitled *Orang-Outang, sive homo sylvestris* (1669), which provoked considerable scientific and religious debate because it drew disconcerting parallels between the structure of the human brain and that of monkeys'. Particular attention was devoted to travel accounts and memoirs, in that the customs, rituals and political systems of other, far-flung peoples offered a fine opportunity for making comparisons with Western nations and Churches, which were plainly incapable of peacefully incorporating competing identities and aspirations:

Let any man look into the History and State of the Turks, and he will see the influence which their tolerating Principles and Temper have on the peace of their Empire. ... They have tolerated various Sects, and particularly Christians (upon the terms of paying a small tribute) tho those Christians esteem their Prophet an Impostor, and would infallibly extirpate with Fire and Sword their present Protectors, if the Empire was in their hands.³³

Many titles listed in the catalogue reveal Collins' interest in the Far East (from China to Japan and from Persia to Siam), but also in Italy, Spain, Sweden, Moscovia, America and Africa. The recurring literary fiction of diaries and correspondence purportedly by Eastern travellers, who encountered, and were amazed by, the contradictions and iniquity of European political and ecclesiastical power structures, was to become a tried and tested expedient in eighteenth-century European literature. One expression of this literary genre is an effective epistolary booklet entitled *A Letter from an Arabian physician to a famous Professor in the University of Hall in Saxony, concerning Mahomet's taking up Arms, his marrying of many Wives, his keeping of Concubines, and his Paradise* (dated Paris, 14 June

³³ [Collins], *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, pp. 102–3.

1706). This can be attributed, if not to Collins himself, then certainly to his milieu. By restating what was a common tolerationist argument, as well as a regular complaint voiced by early Quakers, the booklet credits Islam with a greater degree of tolerance towards otherness than that displayed by the Christian confessions, whose religious practices are certainly no less absurd than those of Islam:

[Mahomet] put no man to death merely upon an account of his Religion. ... He acted an infinitely more merciful and just part than any Sect of Christians never did, when they had it in their power to apply their wholesome severities to those who differ'd from them, if it were only for wearing their clothes in a different manner from them.³⁴

The *Letter from an Arabian physician* appeared occasionally as an appendix to the English translation of *Spaccio* by Giordano Bruno or to the *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, and has been attributed both to Toland and to Collins, though the translation of *Spaccio* is generally attributed to the obscure William Morehead (who would have translated it for Collins' private use). The latter is listed in Collins' catalogue as the editor of another work that is in a certain sense pro-Mahometan, namely *Four Treatises Concerning the Doctrines, Discipline and Worship of the Mahometans* (London, 1712). French translations of the *Letter* circulated in manuscript form and, from 1714 onwards, in print, as an appendix to Collins' work.³⁵

Radical Reading (and Writing) in Enlightenment Europe

When examining a private library there is always the temptation to make deductions about the philosophical, political or religious inclinations of its owner, establishing a rigid connection between the owner and the prevailing orientation of the works. Justin Champion has recently stressed the weakness of an approach that presupposes a passive relationship between the content of a book and the reading experience, or even the necessary identity between owner and reader. The presence of illicit literature in the libraries of Collins, Furlly and Eugene Prince of Savoy, 'the three men who owned the most dangerous collections in Europe', might

³⁴ *A Letter from an Arabian physician to a famous Professor in the University of Hall in Saxony* (Paris, 1706), p. 6.

³⁵ See F.H. Heinemann, 'Prolegomena to a Toland Bibliography', *Notes and Queries* (25 September 1943), p. 183; G. Carabelli, *Tolandiana. Materiali bibliografici per lo studio dell'opera e della fortuna di John Toland (1670–1722)* (Florence, 1975), pp. 158–9, 167–8, 170–72; G. Aquilecchia, 'Scheda bruniana: la traduzione "tolandiana" dello *Spaccio*', *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, 152 (1975): pp. 311–13; P. Almond, 'Western Images of Islam, 1700–1900', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 49 (2003): pp. 412–24.

have been a symptom rather than a cause of a subversive intellectual disposition. ‘Toland, like Furlly, Collins, Locke et al. were not just interested in reading “radical” books, but primarily wanted to engage with the arguments of the mainstream.’³⁶ In this respect, they adopted the rhetorical strategies of the radicals of the 1640s and 50s, who were much more sophisticated than they are normally credited with being, and in whose writings ‘the languages of the dominant culture are frequently scrambled and misapplied for the purposes of parody and subversion, but also to develop and articulate new and radical modes of thought’.³⁷

O’Higgins recognised the Christian rationalists, the Cambridge Platonists and the latitudinarian theologians as the authors who exerted the greatest influence on Collins. Their work is all widely represented in Collins’ library. But the ideal and theoretical continuities that O’Higgins proposed are in place to support his deistical interpretation of Collins. Furthermore, they presuppose a traditional reading of English latitudinarianism that has been questioned by more recent studies.³⁸ Collins’ reflections on the issues of evil, necessity, the conventional status of ethics and the materiality of the soul all seem instead to move in the direction of a philosophical negation of the existence of God. Furthermore, Collins openly reiterated Bayle’s argument that atheism is in any case preferable to superstition.³⁹ The need to disguise uncomfortable truths might have been the result of a legitimate fear for his personal safety or reputation, or even an indulgence for the so-called simple-minded, who apparently wished only to be deceived. Whether he is revealing the irremediable divergences between theologians, denouncing the corruption of the biblical text or the judgments underlying the typical interpretation of the messianic prophecies, or confessing the unknowability of divine attributes, Collins seems to insinuate that it is pointless to pay any heed to a god that is unknown to us and whose eternity and perfection are such that it would be impossible for that god to act within time and make provision for human beings. So, where Collins expresses views that conform to Christian orthodoxy, one must conclude that he was lying. David Berman and Pascal Taranto have examined the clever disguises of Collins’ heterodox thought, concealed from his enemies and the uneducated,

³⁶ J. Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696–1722* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 26, 31, 41. See also J. Champion, ‘“The Fodder of Our Understanding”: Benjamin Furlly’s Library and Intellectual Conversation c. 1680–c. 1725’, in Hutton (ed.), *Benjamin Furlly*, pp. 111–48.

³⁷ McDowell, *English Radical Imagination*, p. 9.

³⁸ O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, pp. 40–50; R. Ashcraft, ‘Latitudinarianism and Toleration: Historical Myth versus Political History’, in R. Kroll, R. Ashcraft and P. Zagorin (eds), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England, 1640–1700* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 155.

³⁹ [Collins], *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, pp. 105–6.

but accessible to like-minded readers. In their opinion, Collins was not really a deist, but a genuine and systematic atheist, albeit covert.⁴⁰

The classics of the Catholic Pyrrhonical tradition, and important and rare titles relating to Jewish anti-Christian polemic, figured prominently on Collins' shelves. The arguments of both traditions found their way into his works, no longer as ammunition for a shrewd confessional strategy, but as useful tools for picking apart any rational, philological or historical justification for the Christian revelation and for denouncing the fraudulence of the Churches. Although the seventeenth century was marked by profound hostility towards Catholics, there was nevertheless some scope for Catholic proselytism in England. The Jesuits organised a missionary programme and set up colleges to train talented English controversialists. Many of these drew on the Pyrrhonical tradition to contest the Anglican apologists.⁴¹ John Vincent Canes, Paulin Cressy, Thomas White and Edward Knott repeatedly maintained that the Anglican 'rule of faith' was insufficient grounds for certain religious knowledge. Montaigne had been the first to apply, with fideistic results, Pyrrhonical conclusions to the context of the sixteenth-century religious crisis: the foundation of knowledge is sensorial perception; however, as this can prove deceptive, it is better to suspend judgement, thereby eluding the arrogance of human reason and the vain suffering of religious conflict. Unable to decide, the Christian Pyrrhonist acts and believes in compliance with the dictates of the religion in which he or she has been brought up. Collins naturally had the works of Sextus Empiricus (Fabricius' 1718 edition, with Estienne's Latin edition alongside the Greek text), Montaigne, Charron and La Mothe le Vayer. He also had a large number of works by the *nouveaux pyrrhoniens* (such as Daniel Huet, Gabriel Naudé, Guy Patin and John Sergeant). Pierre Bayle is referenced in 24 points of the catalogue. Above all, Collins had the complete works of Richard Simon, and he cited or implicitly referred to them throughout his own work. He used Simon's texts to lend weight to his strategy of demolishing the authority of the Scriptures and of tradition, and drew on them for rigorous scholarship and philology. The first respectful, direct allusion to Richard Simon is in the *Discourse of Free-Thinking*,⁴² where, by demonstrating the plausibility of different faiths, Collins ultimately invalidates the credibility of each of them:

⁴⁰ Berman, 'Deism, Immortality, and the Art of Theological Lying', pp. 61–78; P. Taranto, *Du déisme à l'athéisme: la libre pensée d'Anthony Collins* (Paris, 2000), p. 18. See also M. Benítez, 'Anthony Collins revisité: déisme, panthéisme et athéisme aux temps modernes', *La Lettre Clandestine*, 15 (2007): pp. 317–37; P. Taranto, 'Altitude ou platitude? Anthony Collins, l'histoire, la philosophie: Droit de réponse à Miguel Benítez', *La Lettre Clandestine*, 17 (2009): pp. 291–308; D. Lucci, *Scripture and Deism: The Biblical Criticism of the Eighteenth-Century British Deists* (Bern, 2008).

⁴¹ R.H. Popkin, 'Skepticism and Counter-Reformation in France', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 51 (1960): pp. 60–62; R.H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford, 2003).

⁴² [Collins], *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, p. 90.

The Priests throughout the World differ about Scriptures, and the Authority of Scriptures. ... Mere diversity of opinions has no tendency in nature to confusion in society. The Pythagoreans, Stoicks, Scepticks, Academicks, Cynicks, and Stratonicks, all existed in Greece at the same time, and differ'd from one another in the most important points. ... And yet no confusion ever arose in Greece on account of this diversity of opinions. Nor did the infinite variety of Religions and Worships among the Ancients ever produce any disorders or confusion.⁴³

There are discernible and recurring analogies between Collins' celebrated *Discourse* and the *Treatise of Humane Reason* written by Martin Clifford, the sophisticated secretary to the Second Duke of Buckingham. Clifford's book circulated widely in Europe in the form of a French translation by the Unitarian William Popple, adding fresh impetus to the long-running debate on tolerance between Pierre Jurieu, Elie Saurin and Pierre Bayle.⁴⁴ Extensive extracts from the two works found their way, in French translation, into an anonymous treatise (sometimes attributed to A.-F. Boureau-Deslandes) entitled *De la certitude des connoissances humaines, ou Examen philosophique des diverses prérogatives de la Raison et de la Foi; avec un Parallele entre l'une et l'autre: Traduit de l'Anglois, par F.A.D.L.V.* (London, 1741).⁴⁵ In his treatise Clifford did not so much search for a rational foundation for morality as recognise a moral dimension in rationality. What is important is not what but how individuals believe. All individuals should responsibly consider the grounds for their beliefs and declare them honestly, 'whereas on the contrary side, the submitting our judgments to Authority, or any thing else whatsoever, gives universality and perpetuity to every error':

This variety of opinion neither begat any civil war in Greece, neither did the Peripateticks (when both by the strength of their arguments and their Emperour, that party was become the greatest) set up any Inquisition, or High Commission or Committee against the rest; but every man enjoyed his opinion with more safety and freedom, than either his goods and wife.⁴⁶

In *A Discourse concerning the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1724), Collins adopted a shrewder rhetorical strategy: while reaffirming the

⁴³ [Collins], *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, pp. 52–3, 101.

⁴⁴ See [Martin Clifford], *A Treatise of Humane Reason* (London, 1674), pp. 87–91, 7–10; G. Tarantino, *Martin Clifford (1624–1677). Deismo e tolleranza nell'Inghilterra della Restaurazione* (Florence, 2000); G. Tarantino, 'Martin Clifford and *A Treatise of Humane Reason* (1674): A European-Wide Debate', in Ruth Evelyn Savage (ed.), *Philosophy and Religion in Great Britain and Ireland in the Age of Enlightenment: Essays Presented to M.A. Stewart* (Oxford, 2011).

⁴⁵ See J.L. Carr, 'A Curious Eighteenth-Century Translation', *Modern Language Review*, 55 (1960): pp. 575–7.

⁴⁶ [Clifford], *Treatise of Humane Reason*, pp. 4–5, 7–9.

sole, absolute necessity of the prophetic argument for Christianity, he ends up by suggesting that it has to be denied decisive force. In this work Collins considered five prophetic passages from Matthew's Gospel (1:22–3, 2:15, 2:23, 11:14, 13:14). None of them, according to Collins, prove that the biblical prophecies occurred literally in the life of Jesus. Almost all the Christian exegetes had interpreted these passages 'in a secondary, or typical, or mystical, or allegorical, or enigmatical sense, that is, in a sense different from the obvious and literal sense'. If then Christianity is only proven by an allegorical interpretation of prophecies, it effectively has no certain epistemological prop whatsoever. In his *Histoire Critique* Simon had discussed at least three of the five passages from Matthew considered by Collins (1:21–3, 2:15, 2:23). And Collins expressly refers the reader to Simon for a closer analysis of the theme. In the 180 pages of the second part of *Grounds and Reasons*, Collins cites Simon at least forty times.⁴⁷ A similar use of Simon's works can be found in *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*.⁴⁸ Despite the undeniable analogies, however, Collins and Simon depart radically in their conclusions. Simon argues that allegory alone cannot represent positive proof of the truth of Christianity, unless this allegorical interpretation is backed up and handed down by the Catholic tradition. Collins, on the other hand, is little inclined to delegate determination of the content of faith to any authority other than individual reason.

The late Richard H. Popkin observed that one factor contributing to the intellectual crisis of the seventeenth century, in addition to the circulation of sceptical texts, was the greater availability of the classics of Jewish apologetics.⁴⁹ A series of concomitant circumstances favoured greater interest in Jewish culture and literature in Protestant Europe. Besides a widespread millenarianism and the flourishing of Jewish studies, sometimes prompted by a proselytising intent, other contributory factors were the contemporary debate about tolerance towards religious minorities and the interest in biblical criticism that emerged in deist or otherwise heterodox circles. Collins shared with other Enlightenment authors an unresolved ambiguity described by Adam Sutcliffe as a mixture of admiration for the Jewish cultural tradition and intolerance for the ritualism of the uneducated Jewish masses.⁵⁰ In the *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, Collins went so far as to say that they were an 'illiterate, barbarous, and ridiculous people'.⁵¹ His library

⁴⁷ [Anthony Collins], *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, in two parts* (London, 1724), pp. 40, 45–6.

⁴⁸ [Anthony Collins], *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered; in a View of the Controversy, Occasion'd by a late Book, intitled, A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London [= The Hague], 1726).

⁴⁹ R.H. Popkin, 'Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth-Century', in M. Hunter and D. Wootton (eds), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 159–81.

⁵⁰ A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁵¹ [Collins], *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, p. 157.

contained many histories of the Jews and Hebrew grammars. He had the *République des Hébreux* (Amsterdam, 1705) by the erudite Dutch scholar Peter van der Kun (Petrus Cunaeus) and a four-volume edition of the *Bibliotheca Hebraea* (Hamburg, 1715) by Johann Christoph Wolf (1683–1739), an eminent Hebraist from Hamburg whose library collection amounted to some 25,000 volumes. Collins also had *De republica Hebraeorum* by Carlo Sigonio, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus* by John Spencer and *Antiquitez Judaïques* by Jacques Basnage. The auction catalogue referred to a collection of ‘tracts relating to the Jews’. And amongst the numerous works by Toland there was naturally his *Nazarenus, or, Jewish, Gentile and Mahometan Christianity* (1718). In this work, Toland claimed to have found the manuscript of a new Gospel, the Gospel of Barnabas, which recorded the beliefs of the Nazarenes, the earliest Jewish followers of Christ, who ‘observed the original precepts of Jesus, while ... preserving all that was of value in Judaism’ and rejecting Paul’s teachings as ‘impious innovations’.⁵²

Collins had also collected various works relating to the Jewish-Christian controversy. Unsurprisingly he had Richard Mayo’s *De Veritate religionis Christianae, the Conference between a Papist and a Jew* (1678), Basnage’s *Histoire des Juifs* and Kidder’s *Demonstration of the Messiah*. Significantly, he owned at least two editions of Isaac Troki’s work: a Spanish manuscript entitled ‘Fortificacion de la Fé’, and a Latin manuscript called ‘Munimen fidei’, which was published by Johann Christoph Wagenseil as *Tela Ignea Satanae: Hoc est, arcani, et horribiles Judaeorum adversus Christum Deum* (Altdorf, 1681). Collins, moreover, possessed two very rare manuscripts purchased in Holland at great expense: Orobio de Castro’s ‘Prevençiones Divinas contra la Vana Ydolatria de las Gentes’, and ‘Providencia Divina de Dios con Israel’ by Saul Levi Mortera, one of the three chief rabbis of Amsterdam’s Sephardic community. Mortera’s ‘Tratado da verdade da Ley de Moisés’, in which the divine inspiration of the New Testament was denied, circulated widely in manuscript. Although it was aimed at the more radical exponents of Dutch Protestantism, it was never translated into the local language. It circulated principally in the Spanish version produced by Chacham Moses Raphael de Aguilar entitled ‘Providencia de Dios con Ysrael’ and other similar variants.

This Mortera was the Master of the famous Spinoza; and this Work of his is esteem’d by the Jews to be the shrewdest book they have against Christianity. They are forbid, under pain of excommunication, to lend it to any christian, for fear of drawing a storm upon themselves for producing such strong objections against the christian religion. Wherefore no copies are to be procur’d of it but by the greatest accidents.⁵³

⁵² J. Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), pp. 40–43.

⁵³ [Collins], *Grounds and Reasons*, p. 82. See S.L. Mortera, *Tratado da Verdade da lei de Moisés, escrito pelo seu próprio punho em português em Amsterdao 1659–1660*, ed.

It is noteworthy that Wagenseil's *Tela Ignea Satanae*, which was issued in five parts, also included 'Liber Nizzachon vetus'. Probably written in the thirteenth century in France or Germany, this was one of the most aggressive of all anti-Christian polemics.⁵⁴ 'Nizzachon' seems to denote victory, confutation or polemic. It was called 'vetus' to distinguish it from a later text of the same name published in Prague about 1400.

Collins drew heavily on this very extensive and rare body of controversialist literature to try to demonstrate that the man crucified on Golgotha did not fulfil the Jews' messianic expectation of an invincible liberator, and that the miracles alone were not sufficient to prove his divinity. As Gerard Cragg aptly notes: 'If the Bible was a record of Revelation, prophecy and miracle were its twin supports. To these the defenders of orthodoxy made their appeal; against them, therefore, the Deists directed their attack.'⁵⁵ 'Deist' authors generally shared the Spinozian view that all events follow the immutable order of nature.⁵⁶ While 'Nizzachon vetus' attributed Jesus' miracles to skilful application of magical arts acquired in Egypt, Collins affirmed: 'Miracles ... can never mark out a Messiah, Jesus for the Messiah, if both are not mark'd out in the Old Testament.'⁵⁷ The Messiah awaited by the Jews would not have disregarded the Mosaic Law. Rather than healing the wounds of the spirit with the promise of future Redemption and the bewildering testimony of the cross, the true Messiah would have lifted them up, like a triumphant prince, from a material condition of privation, oppression and suffering.

Liberty and Power: Conclusions

Collins' interest in biblical criticism must not simply be attributed to the erudite tastes of a wealthy scholar. As the following allusion to the main tolerationist debates of the day clearly shows, his scholarly interests were prompted by a deep-

H.P. Salomon, *Acta Universitatis Conimbrigensis* (Coimbra, 1988); M. Saperstein, *Exile in Amsterdam: Saul Levi Morteira's Sermons to a Congregation of 'New Jews'* (Cincinnati, 2005).

⁵⁴ *Liber Nizzachon vetus auctoris incogniti, ex Ms. Bibliothecae Argentoratensis*, in Johann Christoph Wagenseil, *Tela Ignea Satanae: hoc est, Arcani, et horribiles Judaeorum adversus Christum Deum, et Christianam religionem libri Anekdotoi* (Altdorf, 1681), tom. I.

⁵⁵ G. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 84.

⁵⁶ R. Burns, *The Great Debate On Miracles: From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume* (Lewisburg, PA, and London, 1981); J.R. Jacob, *Henry Stubbe, Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983); L. Simonutti, 'Spinoza and the English Thinkers. Criticism on Prophecies and Miracles: Blount, Gildon, Earbery', in W. van Bunge and W. Klever (eds), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism Around 1700* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 191–211.

⁵⁷ [Collins], *Grounds and Reasons*, p. 32. Cf. *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzachon Vetus*, with an introduction, translation, and commentary by D. Berger (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 63–4, 74–6, 262.

felt moral and political impulse, by a profound aversion for corruption and the abuse of political power, and the conviction that theological rather than political legitimisation of secular justice did more harm than good to society:

Nothing can be more forcibly written, to show the impolitickness, the folly, the wickedness, and absurdity of beating men into the Gospel or church, than what we have seen already publish'd in Mr. Bayles Philosophical Commentary on these words, Compel them to enter; in Mr. Lockes Three Letters for Toleration; in the Essay concerning the power of the Magistrate in matters of the religion; and in the late Bangorian Controversy by the Divines of the Church of England.⁵⁸

His library shelves did not just house more than 60 titles relating to the Bangorian controversy and the works of Harrington and Milton, but also the *Law of Freedom* by Gerrard Winstanley; George Fox's *Journal*; *Monarchy no Creature of God's Making*, one of the first republican treatises (the author, John Cook, was the Solicitor-General and leading prosecutor at the trial of Charles I); the Leveller work *London's Liberties* (1651); and Nathaniel Bacon's *Historicall Discourse*, a classic of ancient constitutionalism.

Though perhaps anachronistic, it is not inappropriate to consider Anthony Collins – in the words of Gary De Krey – a 'political radical', one of 'those who reject, challenge, or undermine the established political norms or conventions of their day, the intellectual rationales that legitimate those norms or conventions, and the structures of authority that maintain them'.⁵⁹ Moreover, a recent historiographic debate, in pointing out radicalism's strong dependence on context, revealed the limits of a 'nominalist' or a 'substantive' approach to the study of radicalism, suggesting a 'functional' approach instead ('radicalism exists at certain times and places and can be recognized by the functions it performs'). A history of radicalism might, then, arise out of 'study of the interaction between a history of events and a history of languages and/or ideas'.⁶⁰ Such an approach fits with the growing scholarly recognition that the relationship between 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy' in early modern England, whether in terms of religious organisation or intellectual exchange, is dynamic and symbiotic rather than static and oppositional.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*, p. 398.

⁵⁹ G. De Krey, 'Radicals, Reformers, and Republicans: Academic and Political Discourse in Restoration London', in A. Houston and S. Pincus (eds), *A Nation Transformed. England After the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 80.

⁶⁰ Burgess, 'Matter of Context'; see also G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁶¹ N. McDowell, 'Writing the Literary and Cultural History of Radicalism in the English Revolution', in M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino (eds), *Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th & 18th Centuries)*, *Cromohs* 11 (2006), <www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/mcdowell.html>.

The so-called deists were far from unanimous in their political views. The Earl of Rochester's paradoxical fideism can be traced back to a repulsion for the instrumental rationalism of the latitudinarians, and his heterodoxy to a complex and volatile 'radical royalism'.⁶² As for Toland, his republicanism was 'elite and hierarchical'. In his writings, 'the conceptual assertion "that it is only possible to be free in a free state"' was deployed as a justification for reinforcing the independence of the Lords'.⁶³ Furthermore, to Toland, philosophical truth only seemed attainable by a very restricted number of people: a civil religion had to be provided or preserved for everyone else. Collins, on the other hand, who had no fideistic leanings whatsoever and was content with the results of individual rational investigation, however fallible, set out, in my view, to undermine any self-serving social or institutional prevarication.

It is objected, That certain Speculations (tho false) are necessary to be impos'd on Men, in order to assist the Magistrate in preserving the Peace of Society: And that it is therefore as reasonable to deceive Men into Opinions for their own Good, as it is in certain cases to deceive Children. ... I will grant the Reasoning contain'd in the Objection to be found on a just Principle, viz. That the Good of Society is the Rule of whatever is to be allow'd or restrain'd; and I will likewise grant, that if Errors are useful to human Society, they ought to be impos'd: and consequently I must allow the Inference, That Thinking ought be restrain'd. But then I affirm, That the Rule is as falsly as it is irreligiously apply'd, and that both Experience and Reason demonstrate the Imposition of Speculations, whether true or false, to be so far from being a Benefit, that it has been and must be the greatest Mischief that has ever befel or can befall Mankind.⁶⁴

In 1975, following David L. Jacobson's hypothesis of ten years earlier, David Berman definitively attributed a number of articles to Collins published in the *Independent Whig* in 1720.⁶⁵ This was an anti-clerical weekly, written for the most part by two well-known Hanoverian publicists, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. Caroline Robbins described it as 'among the most widely read and important polemical works of the reign of George I'.⁶⁶ Although short-lived,

⁶² S. Ellenzweig, 'The Faith of Unbelief: Rochester's "Satyre," Deism, and Religious Freethinking in Seventeenth-Century England', *JBS*, 44 (2005): p. 34.

⁶³ Champion, *Republican Learning*, p. 250.

⁶⁴ [Collins], *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, pp. 111–12.

⁶⁵ D. Berman, 'Anthony Collins' Essays in the *Independent Whig*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 13 (1975): pp. 463–69; D.L. Jacobson, *The English Libertarian Heritage: From the Writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in The Independent Whig and Cato's Letters* (San Francisco, 1994), p. xxiv.

⁶⁶ C. Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman. Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, MA, 1959),

over a period of thirty-five years there were no fewer than seven English and two American editions, and, in 1767, a French translation by the Baron of Holbach. In article 51 of the *Independent Whig*, Collins developed a theme expounded by Locke; he considered the Church to be a legal association, to which only its members owed obedience. No one, in his view, should be obliged to be part of it or punished for not joining. However, Collins had a much more radical concept of tolerance than that of his friend and mentor. In the society imagined by Locke, confessional groups were closed, peacefully coexisting communities. There was no possibility for an individual to leave a religious community without losing their civil and political rights. And, in truth, Locke excluded the atheist from the sphere of tolerance. Spinoza's – and Collins' – vision was different: every individual should be free to express what they believed, while the formation of broad and influential ecclesiastic hierarchies should be prevented or checked.⁶⁷

When the Minds of the Youth, and their Passions ... are bred up to hate the Persons of Men of other Persuasions, to abhor their Doctrines, and think it matter of just Disgrace to change the Principles of their Education: And when all this is taught as the Dictates of the Holy Scriptures; must they not, under these Prejudices, read the Scriptures, without understanding them? ... But even this is nothing to what those must go through, if they dare to understand the Bible differently from what is vulgarly understood in the Country where they live: They will be deemed Hereticks. ... What is called Heresy, undoes Men in their Trades and Callings, subjects them to Ecclesiastical and Civil Prosecutions, and deprives them of all Preferments in the Church or State.⁶⁸

The 'Independent Whigs' shared the Calvinist view that human beings are fundamentally depraved and constantly vulnerable to the temptation of money, and deduced from this that it was necessary to vigilantly monitor the integrity of those designated to govern: 'Almost all men would follow evil, if they found their greatest advantage or pleasure in it'. They stressed the inescapable ambivalence of power, which is at one and the same time a precondition and a threat to liberty. 'And whereas power can, and for the most part does, subsist where liberty is not,

p. 115. See also R.S. Crane and F.B. Kaye, *A Census of British Newspapers and Periodicals, 1620–1800* (London, 1979), p. 49; G. Tarantino, 'Le Simbole d'un Laïque: il "catechismo repubblicano" di Thomas Gordon', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 112 (2010): pp. 386–464.

⁶⁷ See J. Israel, *Locke, Spinoza and the Philosophical Debate concerning Toleration in the Early Enlightenment (c.1670–c.1750)* (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 5–20.

⁶⁸ [Anthony Collins], *The Enmity of the High Church to the Bible*, in *The Independent Whig*, The Fifth Edition (2 vols, London, 1732), 2 (no. XXXVII, Wednesday, 28 September 1720), pp. 308, 309.

liberty cannot subsist without power; so that she has, as it were, the enemy always at her gates.⁶⁹

At the beginning of this essay I mentioned that moral determinism and the primacy of the Law are two key elements in Collins' radicalism. I will try now to conclude by clarifying this connection. Collins engaged in the diatribe with Samuel Clarke and in other writings on issues relating closely to the materiality of the soul and human liberty. The deficiencies in intelligence and memory found in children and the elderly persuaded him that human thought is characterised by generation, succession and corruption, just like any other material process. As for the concept of liberty, it appeared to him to be contradictory, in that it presupposes the possibility of a cause without an effect.

[There] can be no liberty but what supposes the certainty and necessity of all events. True liberty therefore is consistent with necessity, and ought not to be oppos'd to it, but only to compulsion.⁷⁰

In his claim that 'liberty is compatible with necessity', Thomas Hobbes had been extremely influential: 'preferences are not up to us; volitions are preferences; so volitions are not up to us'.⁷¹ In choosing between two objects, we are led to opt for the one that attracts us most, that seems to be the best or at any rate the lesser of two evils.⁷² 'It is a matter of experience, that man is ever determin'd in his willing or acts of volition and choice.'⁷³ Implicit in Collins' doctrine of liberty was the intention to undermine the clerical presumption to determine and judge what is just or unjust, impious or wise. But it was also closely bound up with his rejection of Cartesian dualism and a philosophical affinity with the Spinozian *reductio ad unum* of thought and extension. Finally, there is the question of moral content. In Collins' view, this is entirely determined by the requirements of peaceful social coexistence. Subjectively, Collins' morality is 'rigorously hedonist'. The human being is a necessary agent, determined by pleasure and pain. What makes crime immoral is the pain of punishment, which has nothing to do with moral judgement of the individual, but is exclusively about the well-being and cohesion of the community.⁷⁴ It is the law, understood as social convention rather than as

⁶⁹ J. Trenchard and T. Gordon, *Cato's Letters: or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other Important Subjects*, (ed.) R. Hamowy (4 vols in 2, Indianapolis, 1995), 2, no. 40 (5 August 1721), p. 280; 1, no. 33 (17 June 1721), p. 239.

⁷⁰ [Anthony Collins], *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, the Evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony* (London, 1707), p. 50.

⁷¹ Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, pp. 7–8, 57.

⁷² [Collins], *Essay Concerning Use of Reason*, pp. 45–50; BL, Add. MS 4282, fols 129v–130.

⁷³ [Anthony Collins], *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (London, 1717), p. 52.

⁷⁴ Taranto, *Du déisme à l'athéisme*, pp. 332, 415, 421, 422.

Chapter 12

William Hone (1780–1842), Print-Culture, and the Nature of Radicalism

Jason McElligott

Introduction

William Hone was a far from prosperous bookseller who traded from a succession of small shops in Fleet Street, Old Bailey, The Strand, Ludgate Hill and Paternoster Row in the quarter of a century before 1826. He was a minor figure in London radical circles but was propelled to national prominence in 1817 by the decision of the Attorney General to try him on three separate charges of blasphemous libel.¹ By 1832 he had rejected progressive politics and embraced reaction, yet his earlier stance proved to be an inspiration to freethinkers throughout the nineteenth century, most famously in a notorious blasphemy trial of 1883.² Hone was the subject of a useful biography published in 1912 but thereafter he received little, if any, attention until the work of Ann Hone and Marcus Wood, which illuminated important aspects of early nineteenth-century radical networks and political culture. In recent years, Kyle Grimes has done much to rescue Hone from obscurity, most notably with his excellent on-line resource of Hone-related material, and Ben Wilson has produced a very readable portrait of Hone as a key figure in the development of a free press in Britain.³

The relatively scant literature on Hone presents him as a moderate radical who was interested primarily in peaceful political reform. This essay will sketch an outline of Hone's political beliefs. In so doing, it will demonstrate that Hone was much more socially and politically radical than has recently been acknowledged,

¹ Throughout this chapter I use the term 'radical' in the sense of 'functional radicalism', as developed by J. Colin Davis in 'Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660', *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): pp. 192–213.

² J. Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago, IL, 1998), pp. 18–60.

³ F.W. Hackwood, *William Hone: His Life and Times* (1912; reprinted New York, 1970); A. Hone, *For the Cause of Truth: Radicalism in London, 1796–1821* (Oxford, 1982); M. Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture, 1790–1822* (Oxford, 1994); B. Wilson, *The Laughter of Triumph. William Hone and the Fight for the Free Press* (London, 2005). For Grimes's 'William Hone BioText Project', see <http://www.uab.edu/english/hone/>.

and that he was interested in changing much more than the system of political representation in Parliament. It will be suggested that Hone's encyclopaedic knowledge of early-modern print-culture – in particular, his interest in the Leveller leader John Lilburne – provides important evidence against which to test recent assertions about the impossibility of tracing a British radical tradition across the early modern period and beyond.⁴ Finally, it will also be suggested that historians of radicalism need to read a variety of texts in much more sophisticated ways than they have hitherto done; Hone's career demonstrates that it is necessary to deploy a range of tools to ascertain what radicals were saying in public, what they were deliberately not saying in public, and how and why they chose between the options of speaking plainly, encoding their messages or remaining silent at particular points in time.

The Social, Political and Economic Radicalism of William Hone

William Hone was born in Bath in 1780, though his family moved to London when he was a child. In 1800, aged twenty, he began to trade as a bookseller; a business which he followed with varying degrees of failure for the next three decades. He died in the capital ten years after the Reform Bill of 1832. Hone came from a conservative, evangelical Christian background and became interested in politics at a very young age. In his autobiography he recorded hearing from a neighbour, at the age of nine, of the fall of the Bastille. He and his family followed subsequent events in France in the London newspapers, and often had a map of Europe to hand so that they could chart the movements of armies across the Continent. At the age of twelve he penned a six-verse doggerel poem against the French Revolution, which was published by the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers.⁵ In 1796, he signalled his conversion to the side of the reformers by joining the London Corresponding Society (LCS). This conversion – at, it must be said, a particularly inauspicious time for the friends of liberty – was brought about by an intoxicating mixture of youthful rebellion against his conservative religious upbringing; discussions about politics with friends, colleagues, and neighbours; exposure to contemporary printed news and pamphlets; and, as we shall see, his passion for (and access to) printed items from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is not known how active Hone was in the LCS, or when he left the organisation. The only thing that is clear about these years is that, through a programme of voracious reading, he constructed for himself a 'rational' form of religion that admired the person of Jesus Christ but viewed the Bible as nothing more than an intriguing historical text.

⁴ G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1–12, 62–81, 218–35, 313–31; B. Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil Wars and the Passions of Posterity* (London, 2001).

⁵ [William Hone], *The Contrast* [1792] s.sh., copy at BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 2r.

It is impossible to delineate the exact contours of Hone's political beliefs at any point in time, or to trace how his ideas evolved and changed. Hone spoke loudly against what he disapproved of – corruption, oppression, tyranny, and bigotry – but individuals can define these terms in any number of ways, and nowhere in his voluminous surviving public pamphlets or private letters and papers does Hone ever spell out precisely what he wanted.⁶ Hone's published works are usually placed firmly within a broad, constitutionalist idiom of reform. They condemned current abuses but tended to place the blame on one person – in Hone's case, usually the Prince Regent, who succeeded to the throne in 1821 as George IV – or a small clique of ministers. They implied, moreover, that that the system could be successfully reformed once this person or clique had been removed from power. It is natural to assume that this position represents Hone's actual politics, but it was a common strategy for reforming polemicists to insinuate themselves within this mainstream constitutionalist discourse in order to plant 'seemingly innocent and benign ideas from which revolutionary implications could be drawn'. In other words, attention to the literal and surface meaning of a text *can* miss entirely the intended message of the piece: texts may have had decidedly radical undertones.⁷

During the 1810s we catch a number of tantalising glimpses of Hone working with a group of like-minded men who believed in non-violent parliamentary reform. In June 1810 he was prominent among those who organised the enthusiastic welcome for the moderate reformist MP Sir Francis Burdett on his release from imprisonment for libel upon the privileges of the House of Commons, and four years later he collected money for the relief of Lord Cochrane who had been framed on charges of corruption after bringing to light serious abuses in the administration of the Royal Navy.⁸ Yet, it would be a mistake to assume that Hone was only, or even primarily, interested in franchise reform. He had broader social interests, including religious liberty for Roman Catholics and racial equality for black Africans. He was a long-standing supporter of Catholic Emancipation and seems to have drafted a petition to Parliament in the mid-1820s which attacked the restrictions upon Roman Catholics as 'anti-Christian, unjust, and in spirit subversive of the Protestant principle'.⁹ In 1810, the alleged son of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the heroic leader of a West Indian slave revolt who had died in 1803, was living as one of the family in Hone's house in London. The one surviving letter from Hone to the young boy reveals his concern for the physical well-being

⁶ J. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 20, 26; D. Worrall, *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance, 1790–1820* (London, 1992), p. 110.

⁷ M. Philp, 'On Not Inventing the English Revolution', in Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 143, 147.

⁸ Wilson, *Laughter of Triumph*, p. 63; Hackwood, *William Hone*, pp. 86–90.

⁹ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 252r.

and intellectual development of his charge.¹⁰ As late as 1821 Hone defended the memory of the French Revolution and condemned the ‘Continental Despots’ and English ministers who had conspired ‘to crush the rising liberties of France’ in the mid-1790s. He ignored the Revolutionary Terror and admitted that France had committed ‘acts of military aggression’ when it ‘fell back into Slavery’ under Napoleon, but claimed that the wars against France had been directed ‘against the best interests of mankind’.¹¹ Such a spirited defence of the Revolution at such a late date, long after many other men had renounced their youthful enthusiasm for events across the Channel, is a telling indication of the likely nature and extent of Hone’s politics.¹²

Hone was also interested in economic reforms that might alleviate the distress of the poor and, in particular, the reform of the criminal justice system. In 1806, for example, he and his then business partner John Bone, another former member of the London Corresponding Society, convened a public meeting at a tavern near St Paul’s. They planned to replace the Poor Laws with something called ‘Tranquillity’, a scheme which would be part savings bank, insurance office and employment exchange. It was not unlike a system of National Insurance, but in the absence of either state support or sponsorship from wealthy men the scheme was doomed to failure; those who needed it most were precisely those who were least likely to be able to put aside a few pence every week in anticipation of future distress.¹³ Hone was particularly concerned with trying to reform the notorious abuses and inequities of the criminal justice system. His near-constant state of financial embarrassment and his several bankruptcies ensured that he took a particular interest in the reform of the laws concerning the imprisonment of debtors.¹⁴ In 1814, he took it upon himself to expose the inhuman and degrading treatment meted out to prisoners in the lunatic asylum of Bethlem, and was instrumental in the drawing-up of plans for a new, altogether more rational and humane form of asylum.¹⁵ The following year saw the publication of a damning indictment of the legal system; a comprehensively researched pamphlet which demonstrated that a young servant girl named Eliza Fenning had recently been sent to the gallows by a vindictive, partial judge on the basis of nothing more than circumstantial evidence supported by lies, fabrications and inventions.¹⁶ Hone was particularly concerned

¹⁰ Wilson, *Laughter of Triumph*, p. 63; Hackwood, *William Hone*, pp. 83–4; William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works* (London, 1888).

¹¹ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fols 168r–169r.

¹² BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 169r. See also W. Hone, *The Right Divine of Kings to Govern Wrong!* (London, 1821), unpaginated [p. 12].

¹³ Wilson, *Laughter of Triumph*, p. 4; Hackwood, *William Hone*, p. 74; A. Hone, *For the Cause of Truth*, p. 32.

¹⁴ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fols 162r–v, 196r–197r.

¹⁵ BL, Add. MS 40,856, fols 2r–3v; BL, Add. MS 40,120, fols 49r–50v.

¹⁶ William Hone *The Important Results of an Elaborate Investigation into the Mysterious Case of Elizabeth Fenning* (2 pts, London, 1815).

to defend the principle of *habeas corpus* and the right to trial by a jury of one's peers. For him, as for many other radicals, the right to trial by jury was the essence of English liberty: the great bulwark against tyranny which had limited the ability of successive administrations to impose their will upon free-born Englishmen. Without the fundamental right to be tried by a jury, the reform of the franchise was, or would be rendered, meaningless.¹⁷

In the five years or so after 1817 Hone worked with the illustrator George Cruickshank to produce sixteen skilful satires of, and parodies upon, the regime. Many of these items focussed on the plight of the poor, and their extraordinary success was due in large part to the almost perfect combination of Cruickshank's skill in drawing striking – and deceptively simplistic – images which related directly to the words penned by Hone. Hone's attacks on the Prince Regent as the 'dandy of sixty [years of age], / who bows with a grace / And has *taste* in wigs, collars, cuirasses, and lace' would not have had the same bite in the absence of Cruickshank's drawings of the aging prince as a corpulent, indolent and drunken debauchee; the visual contrast between his large backside and pot-belly and the emaciated children of the poor is striking even almost two hundred years later.¹⁸ At first glance the *Bank Restriction Note* of 1819 looks like a real banknote, but on closer inspection it becomes clear that the pound sign has been replaced with a curling hangman's rope; the name of the Governor of the Bank of England is given as the eponymous hangman 'J. Ketch'; and the serial number of note has been replaced with the lifeless bodies of eleven hanged men and women.¹⁹ This was a powerful attack on the hypocrisy of a government which allowed the production of banknotes which were easily forged and then hanged hungry men, women and children for passing them off in shops. Hone intended it to reach into 'every nook and cranny where a *Bank* note goes'.²⁰ At least one contemporary who saw the *Bank Restriction Note* before its publication believed that this flimsy piece of paper was 'worth fifty folio volumes' of written polemic, and hoped that 'some real good may arise from it'.²¹ He was proved right; within a few days of its appearance the Bank of England withdrew its easily forged notes and began to replace them with a more secure form of paper currency.

Encoding Tyrannicide

Hone's best-selling pamphlet *The Man in the Moon*, which was published in the first weeks of 1820, is ostensibly nothing more than a witty satire against the

¹⁷ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, p. 65.

¹⁸ *The Political House That Jack Built* (London, 1819); *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* (London, 1820).

¹⁹ For an on-line copy of this 'banknote', see <http://libraries.adelphi.edu/bar/hone/>.

²⁰ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 115r.

²¹ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fols 116v–17r.

Prince Regent, but when one reads the text in conjunction with the paratext it is possible to recover something of Hone's mindset at that particular point in time.²² The text begins with the anonymous author recounting that he had recently dreamt that he went to the moon in a balloon and there found that everything resembled that which he had left behind on earth. The author happened to see the 'Prince of Lunataria' on his way to deliver a 'grand oration' to the members of his Senate. He followed the Prince and recorded the speech, which began with the less than statesman-like: 'I grieve to say, / That poor old Dad, / Is just as ___ bad'. The allusion to the long-standing illness of George III that would have been clear to all readers. The Prince apologised for dragging the Senators from their country estates but told them the shocking news that 'CONSPIRACY and TREASON are abroad'. He demanded decisive measures 'to quell the Radicals, / and save our bacon', and suggested that the hungry of the nation should be forced to eat 'STEEL LOZENGES' – that is, soldiers' bayonets – and that all due care should be taken to prevent the 'circulation of little books' produced by the radicals. At the end of the Prince's speech, the author heard a loud noise which consisted of the groans of those imprisoned in dungeons, the moans of starving children, and the din of war. He awoke from his dream and found himself on earth again.

There is nothing particularly seditious about this pamphlet until one reads the two epigraphs at the start of the text in their original context. The first, on the title-page itself, is from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*: 'if Caesar can hide the Sun with a blanket, or put the Moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light.' Cruickshank's illustration below this quotation demonstrates the impossibility of the stocky, corpulent 'Prince of Lunataria' ever managing to achieve such a heroic feat: he deserves only ridicule, not tribute or respect. Yet, the deeper meaning of the epigraph is clear from the context of Act III, Scene I of Shakespeare's play, in which the Roman official Caius Lucius informs the British king Cymbeline that he has not paid the necessary yearly tribute to Caesar. Cymbeline's queen reminds him of the heroic resistance of the ancient Britons to the Romans, and his son Cloten speaks the words quoted by Hone ('if Caesar can hide the Sun ...') as a way of asserting that his father should refrain from prostrating himself before the tyrant. Cymbeline then asserts that it is fitting for a 'warlike people, whom we reckon / Ourselves to be' to throw off Roman tyranny, and draws encouragement from the other peoples in Europe who 'for / Their liberties are now in arms'.

The theme of armed resistance to tyranny is continued in the second of the epigraphs quoted at the start of *The Man in the Moon*:

²² For Hone's authorship, probably in conjunction with another unknown writer, see BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 127r, and Add. MS 41,071, fol. 2r. The two poems at the end of the pamphlet were solely the work of Hone, as were, in all likelihood, the two epigraphs at the start of the text. For an example of a reader who understood that there were meanings encoded in the text, see *The News*, no. 753 (16 January 1820), p. 20.

Is there not
 Some hidden thunder in the stores of heaven,
 Red with uncommon wrath, to blast the men
 Who owe their greatness to their country's ruin?

Unlike the quotation from Shakespeare, Hone did not provide his readers with the source of these lines: they are from Act I, Scene I of Joseph Addison's play *Cato*, which was first performed in 1713.²³ Cato (95–46 BC) was a Roman senator; a noble, heroic and high-minded defender of the republic, who committed suicide rather than surrender to the victorious tyrant Julius Caesar. Addison's play opens with Caesar marching on the beleaguered members of the Roman Senate who had taken refuge in the North African town of Utica. The odds are heavily against Cato but he is determined to fight 'the cause / Of honour, virtue, liberty, and *Rome*', and tries to rally his supporters with a speech to the Senate which begins: 'Fathers, we once again are met in council. / *Caesar's* approach has summon'd us together, / And *Rome* attends her fate from our resolves'. Cato's oration ends with a rousing call to arms: 'A day, an hour of virtuous liberty, / Is worth a whole eternity in bondage'. At the end of the play, with the fall of Utica imminent, Cato commits suicide, but as he dies news arrives that Spain has risen against Caesar. Portius, one of Cato's sons, is left to lament: 'Were *Cato* at their head, once more might *Rome* / Assert her rights, and claim her liberty'.²⁴ As with the first epigraph from Shakespeare, there is hope for the future because there are brave souls in Europe who are in arms against tyranny.

At one level, the reader is merely meant to contrast the nobility of Cato and the imbecility of the Prince Regent. Yet, the deeper, violent undertone of *The Man in the Moon* is clear when one looks at the context of Hone's second epigraph in the original play by Addison. In Act I, Scene I, Cato's sons Marcus and Portius contemplate the relentless forward march of Caesar, and Marcus is made to say:

I'm tortured, even to madness, when I think
 On the proud victor: every time he's named
Pharsalia rises to my view! – I see
 Th' insulting tyrant, prancing o'er the field
 Strow'd with *Rome's* citizens, and drench'd in slaughter,
 His Horse's hoofs wet with Patrician blood!
 Oh Portius, is there not some chosen curse,
 Some hidden thunder in the stores of Heaven,
 Red with uncommon wrath, to blast the man,
 Who owes his greatness to his country's ruin?²⁵

²³ A.C. Guthkelch (ed.), *The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison*, Vol. I: *Poems and Plays* (London, 1914), pp. 335–420.

²⁴ Addison, *Cato*, I, i, 31–32; II, i, 7–9; II, i, 99–100; II, ii, 28–32; V, iv, 58–59.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, i, 15–24.

Caesar's brutal victory at the battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC forced the few remaining defenders of the republic to flee to North Africa. *The Man in the Moon* was composed between late December 1819 and late January 1820,²⁶ and it is hard not to read Pharsalus as a metaphor for the slaughter at Peterloo in August 1819. If the message of Hone's second epigraph was the necessity of tyrannicide, it is perhaps significant that he silently changed the original call to destroy 'the man, / Who owes his greatness to his country's ruin', to the more general 'the men / Who owe their greatness to their country's ruin'. The change is unlikely to have been accidental. He was probably broadening the call for vengeance to include the leading ministers of the administration: George Canning, Lord Sidmouth and Lord Castlereagh.²⁷

Hone's call for the assassination of the Prince Regent and some of his leading ministers is clear, but it would perhaps be incorrect to characterise Hone's politics as 'republican' at this point in time. His intimate knowledge of the English Civil Wars of the 1640s and the Commonwealth and Protectorate of the 1650s (which will be examined below in the last section) may have convinced him that it was possible to have the constitutional form of a republic – but for the citizens of that state to be unfree, and perhaps even less free than they had been under monarchical government. Hone may have followed those eighteenth-century thinkers who admired the execution of Charles I as 'the exemplary punishment of a tyrant', but did not necessarily favour the subsequent abolition of the monarchy.²⁸ On the other hand, he may have mimicked those late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century republicans who, conscious of the terrible posthumous reputation of the English Commonwealth, publicly supported a monarchy but secretly desired to eviscerate the power of the monarch. The outward form of government would remain the same, but there would be such a fundamental shift in the balance of constitutional power that the king would be reduced to a figurehead: 'a convenient detail, certainly, but a disposable one'.²⁹ It is perhaps more likely, however, that Hone was merely 'Red with uncommon wrath' in the aftermath of Peterloo and that, although he knew what he was against, he was less sure of the exact nature of the positive changes that could or should be enacted by the reformers.

Blasphemous Rumours

Hone was catapulted to national prominence in December 1817 by the ill-fated decision of the government to try him for blasphemous libel. In fact, he faced not

²⁶ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 127r; BL, Add. MS 41,071, fol. 2r.

²⁷ *The Man in the Moon* was dedicated, sarcastically, to George Canning. This dedication and two rhymes appended to the end of the main text also attacked Sidmouth and Castlereagh in the strongest possible terms.

²⁸ Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, p. 153.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 139, 112–13, 114, 139, 210.

merely one trial but three separate trials on three consecutive days. The immediate pretext for the prosecutions was three parodies which he had published against the government earlier that year: *John Wilkes's Catechism of a Ministerial Member*, *The Political Litany* and *The Sinecurist's Creed*. Each of these parodies used the form of a part of the Book of Common Prayer but changed the content to ridicule the government and its hangers-on.³⁰

During the Napoleonic wars, criticisms of the corruption and venality of England's rulers had fallen largely on deaf ears due to a mixture of patriotic sentiment, high wages and full employment. Yet, for many of George III's subjects, the peace dividend after 1815 consisted of hunger and economic dislocation and, in such circumstances, the regime's flagrant venality began to rankle. The violent Spa Fields Riots of 1816, the greatly increased circulation of the radical and republican press, and the hostile reception given to the Prince Regent whenever he appeared in public, showed the depth of the alienation of large sections of the people from their rulers. In 1817, a severely rattled government passed a number of repressive pieces of legislation, including the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. The government was also anxious to teach the radical press a lesson and Hone was evidently carefully selected for punishment because it was believed that it could be suggested that his offences were not against the Prince Regent, but against God and the Church 'as by law established'. What juror could possibly side with this impecunious, radical bookseller against the Almighty?

It is not possible here to do full justice to Hone's speeches at his trial in December 1817, which have been described as among the greatest ever made in an English court.³¹ The parodies produced much mirth from the public gallery as they were read into the official record by the clerk, yet Hone went out of his way to condemn those who laughed. He faced the Anglican burghers of the jury with a simple strategy. He acknowledged that he was not a member of the Church of England but presented himself as a man of independent mind, good character, sober disposition and religious sensibilities who had been vindictively persecuted by a government which was determined to erode the fundamental liberties of England.³² He argued that parodies were as old as printing; there had never been a prosecution for parody; and he had parodied the government, not the Church or religion. His had been a political not a religious act. Indeed, men should not be punished for reasoned, rational arguments made in good faith. He recognised, he said, when addressing the jury:

³⁰ *The Three Trials of William Hone for Publishing Three Parodies* (3 pts, London, 1818), pp. 9–10, 82.

³¹ Wilson, *Laughter of Triumph*, pp. 222–59; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 721. See J. McElligott, 'Rethinking Hone's Blasphemy Trials of 1817' (forthcoming).

³² *Three Trials of William Hone*, pp. 18–19, 120, 158–9.

that the political opinions of the gentlemen of the jury might be opposed to his own. But here the difficulty was trifling, because he was sure that prejudices were fast wearing away; that men, as they intermixed more kindly, respected the conscientious opinions of each other: and believing, as he did most sincerely, that opinions wholly opposed to his views were honestly entertained by most respectable and worthy men, he also believed that such men would give him credit for as much honesty in his persuasions, and thus each would tolerate the other. He therefore, from a jury of enlightened merchants of the City of London, claimed their protection of his right to express his opinions, opposed, as he imagined they might be, to their own; and he was persuaded, that just and liberal feelings would rally in the hearts of his jurymen, and that they would do unto him as they would that men should do unto them.³³

This appeal to the ‘honesty’ and ‘just and liberal feelings’ of a jury of ‘enlightened merchants of the City of London’ was a powerful, and highly successful, rhetorical tool. It could stand as the archetype of Jürgen Habermas’s model of a reasoned, enlightened, rational and independent bourgeois public sphere – and should, incidentally, serve as a warning about the futility of trying to locate a ‘public sphere’ amid the sectarian strife of Tudor and Stuart England.³⁴

The Attorney General opened the case for the prosecution by reference to the 1662 Act of Uniformity which protected the Established Church from ridicule. Hone, for his part, stood on the Revolution of 1688 and likened the government to the Stuarts and their hated Court of Star Chamber.³⁵ The central element in his defence was a collection of more than eighty parodies from old books, pamphlets and visual prints, which he used to show how commonplace and uncontroversial religious parodies had been since the first invention of printing. The earliest of these sources was a parody by Martin Luther on the first verse of the first Psalm. And if there was a single moment in each trial when the jury decided to acquit Hone it was probably, if one can judge by the murmurs of disapproval from the public gallery, when the Attorney General stood up to rebut Hone’s defence and remarked that Martin Luther should have been prosecuted for blasphemy if he had indeed published the piece quoted by Hone.³⁶ One need hardly remark that it was disastrous for the Attorney General to have aligned himself with the Pope and to have reinforced the link between Hone and Luther in front of a Protestant

³³ *Three Trials of William Hone*, p. 128.

³⁴ Cf. P. Lake and S. Pincus, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England’, *JBS*, 45 (2006): pp. 270–92; P. Lake and S. Pincus (eds), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007). For an overview of the serious conceptual weaknesses in early modern British historians’ use of the term ‘public sphere’, see J. McElligott, ‘The Perils of Print Culture: EEBO, ECCO and the I-Generation’ (forthcoming).

³⁵ *Three Trials of William Hone*, pp. 94, 125, 141–2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 131, 151.

jury. Hone's acquittal at the end of each day's trial, and his acclamation at the end of the third day by a crowd of over 20,000 Londoners outside the Guildhall, showed the powerlessness of the government and earned him a national reputation as the defender of constitutional freedom and liberty of the press.³⁷ He was now effectively beyond censure by the government; they would not risk yet further public humiliation by trying him again.

William St Clair has rightly warned about the huge exaggeration of print-runs by authors and booksellers during this period in order to enhance the desirability of their products.³⁸ Be that as it may, Hone's satires and parodies do seem to have sold like 'wildfire'.³⁹ *The Political House that Jack Built* (1819), an attack on the lawyers, soldiers, clerics and courtiers who underpinned royal power, apparently sold more than 100,000 copies in a few months, and sales of *The Man in the Moon* (1820) seem to have been comparable.⁴⁰ During the turbulent years between 1819 and 1821, Hone's populist arguments against tyranny, corruption, and oppression found a ready audience throughout Britain. Yet the political temperature cooled decisively during the early 1820s. The ill-advised Cato Street Conspiracy alienated moderate reformist opinion from the republican ultra-radicals who advocated violence. This occurred just as the economy began to improve and the first moves were made to prune the bloated Civil List, reform the criminal code, cut taxes and remove the most flagrant abuses of power.⁴¹ Hone followed the mood of the public in becoming progressively less interested in politics during the decade.⁴² By November 1826 he had turned his back on his earlier notoriety, wishing to consign his political pamphlets to an unlamented grave.⁴³ Over the following years he maintained an interest in the progress of parliamentary Reform, but did not agitate for it in any way. By 1832, he had travelled so far away from his previous positions that he condemned the Reform Act as too far-reaching. Two years later, he and several of his family became members of an evangelical Christian church.⁴⁴

³⁷ BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 93v.

³⁸ W. St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 25, 181.

³⁹ BL, Add MS 40,120, fol. 115r

⁴⁰ Wood, *Radical Satire*, pp. 215–63.

⁴¹ Thompson, *English Working Class*, p. 709; R. Hendrix, 'Popular Humor and the "Black Dwarf"', *JBS*, 16 (1976): p. 128; V. Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2006), pp. 417, 420, 425, 575, 580.

⁴² Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, p. 544.

⁴³ William Hone, *Facetiae and Miscellanies* (12 pts, London, 1827), p. iii. The preface to this work is dated November 1826.

⁴⁴ Hackwood, *William Hone*, pp. 305–15.

Print-Culture and the Radical Tradition

In one sense, Hone's career was far from unique. There were plenty of men and women in London in the three decades after 1789 who advocated various types and shades of social, economic and political reform.⁴⁵ Many of these people suffered for their cause. Hone was, in fact, only one among hundreds of writers, booksellers, printers, shop assistants and hawkers who faced charges in relation to radical books and pamphlets in the years between 1789 and 1825.⁴⁶ Hone was, however, unique in several important respects: his intense bibliomania, his eclectic tastes, and his profound knowledge of early modern print culture. Marcus Wood has written at length on Hone's indebtedness to eighteenth-century books and pamphlets, but has failed to notice his intense familiarity with Tudor and Stuart print-culture. Unless one appreciates the broad range of the material he read – from his own times back to the first appearance of moveable type in the late fifteenth century – one can only get, at best, a partial and misleading picture of Hone's rhetorical strategies and polemical purpose.⁴⁷

Hone's earliest memories were of reading. He started at the age of four or five with, conventionally enough, *The Bible* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The volume of his reading increased almost exponentially over time and by the age of sixteen he felt able to declare that there were no romances or novels in the English language which he 'had not sought out and perused'.⁴⁸ He obviously benefited greatly from the sudden flowering in the third quarter of the eighteenth century of cheap editions of hitherto expensive literary works, a process which has been described in William St Clair's stimulating *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*.⁴⁹ Whenever one comes across Hone in any context throughout the entire course of his life he is invariably reading, buying, perusing, reviewing, selling, borrowing or collecting books. Any money he earned from his business was frittered away buying old books.⁵⁰

The copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* given to him by his father at the age of four was, as he recorded in his autobiography, a 'good old woodcut copy'. By the time he was 10 he had taken to haunting booksellers' stalls around London to read old black-letter material.⁵¹ At about the age of twelve, he befriended a cobbler in Theobald's Road who had amassed a large collection of 'black-letter lore', including Caxton's 1482 edition of the medieval history book known as the *Polychronicon*

⁴⁵ See A. Hone, *For the Cause of Truth*, *passim*.

⁴⁶ St Clair, *Reading Nation*, p. 310.

⁴⁷ Wood, *Radical Satire*, *passim*.

⁴⁸ Hackwood, *William Hone*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ St Clair, *Reading Nation*, p. 205.

⁵⁰ I. McCalman, *Radical Underworld. Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 214.

⁵¹ Hackwood, *William Hone*, p. 29.

and Richard Pynson's *Kalendar of Shepherds*, first published in 1497.⁵² The details of Hone's early reading are sketchy; almost all of what is known about his reading habits during this period derives from the autobiographical fragments he penned during the 1830s. These snippets of information do, however, suggest that it would be unwise to follow William St Clair in insisting upon a 'mass extinction' of old black-letter ballads and chapbooks in the Romantic period due to the availability, for the first time, of relatively cheap novels and collections of poetry.⁵³ Many readers must, like Hone, have seen no inherent contradiction in enjoying texts that had been available for centuries in addition to reading a range of innovative literary genres.

At some point during his early to mid-teens Hone made a chance discovery which had a profound impact both upon his immediate political development, and on the course of his entire adult life. He came across a discarded sheet of paper from an old book which had been used to wrap an item bought in some shop or other. He read it and became fascinated by it. He toured the bookshops of the capital until he came across somebody who could identify it as a sheet from the 1649 account of John Lilburne's trial and acquittal at Guildhall on charges of treason. He saved his pocket-money and bought a copy of the original pamphlet for half a crown. It riveted him and led to a lifelong fascination with the Leveller leader.⁵⁴ There is very little evidence as to what Hone read between his mid-teens and about 1819, but in that year he began to amass a large collection of incunabula, printed books, manuscripts and visual prints as part of his research for his 'History of Parody'. In 1826, however, Hone was declared bankrupt and, early in the following year, he was forced to auction this collection in an attempt to pay some of his debts. We therefore have a clear idea of the books and pamphlets that Hone owned during the period of his life when he was at his most politically radical.

Among the 659 individual lots that went under the hammer was a volume of pamphlets which contained Lilburne's *Innocency and Truth Justified* (1646); a book of prints containing two seventeenth-century portraits of Lilburne; five tracts published for and against the Levellers between 1647 and 1659; a 'large collection' of 82 pamphlets by and about Lilburne and the Levellers; and another, smaller, collection of 'Lilburne Tracts', which had belonged to a certain Jeremiah Joyce in 1794.⁵⁵ Hone's interest in the Leveller leader was so strong that he

⁵² Ibid., p. 43; M.W. Driver, 'When is a miscellany not miscellaneous? Making sense of the *Kalendar of Shepherds*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003): pp. 199–214.

⁵³ St Clair, *Reading Nation*, pp. 351–2.

⁵⁴ Hackwood, *William Hone*, pp. 39–41. The tract was *The Triall, of Lieut. Collonell John Lilburne, By an extraordinary or special Commission, of Oyear and Terminer, at the Guild-Hall of London, the 24, 25, 26. of Octob. 1649. Being as exactly pen'd and taken in short hand* (1649).

⁵⁵ *Catalogue of Books, Books of Prints, &c. Collected for a History of Parody, by Mr William Hone, Containing an Extensive and Remarkable Assemblage of Extraordinary Parodies* (1827), items 302, 538, 617, 636, and 637.

arranged for somebody to transcribe the text of *A Discourse Betwixt Lieutenant Colonel John Lilburn ... and Mr Hugh Peter* (1649), one of the few Lilburne pamphlets that was not among his personal collection in 1827.⁵⁶ He presumably arranged for this transcription to be made before May 1820, when he discovered the Thomason Tracts, which contain this pamphlet and many other tracts by and about Lilburne.⁵⁷

Blair Worden has claimed that the Levellers ‘as a subject of historical scholarship and controversy’ were a discovery of the twentieth century. He suggests that few, if any, people had ever heard about this *groupuscule* before they were adopted and championed by Marxist-inclined historians. Worden admits that John Lilburne’s name did appear sporadically throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but suggests that ‘it was not as a Leveller leader or an exponent of Leveller ideas that he was famed. He owed his celebrity rather to the legal issues raised by his trials of 1649 and 1653, to his spirited and colourful performances at them, and to the popular clamour they aroused.’⁵⁸ These claims are less than entirely convincing. Hone did indeed first encounter Lilburne in the context of his 1649 trial, but his interests evidently developed far beyond the constitutional issues raised by the Leveller’s trials. Hone intended to write ‘a Life of that Extraordinary Person’ and his collection of as many items as possible by and about the other Leveller leaders and their followers suggests that he would have situated his subject within the broader religio-political contexts of the 1640s and 1650s.⁵⁹ Hone was not merely interested in Lilburne and the Levellers. In fact, the personal library that he was forced to sell in 1827 contained a surprising array of ‘radical’ texts from across the entire early modern period: all of the Marprelate tracts from the 1580s; five Digger pamphlets from 1649; a ‘rare and curious’ collection of the works of Gerrard Winstanley; Henry Neville’s 1647 *Parliament of Ladies* and his utopian 1668 *Isles of Pines*; as well as at least one of the Martin Mar-Priest tracts from the 1640s. He also had an impressive collection of Whig material from the Exclusion Crisis, as well as a startling familiarity with the literature in support of the Glorious Revolution. In addition, he had gone out of his way to collect a number of important works by the key eighteenth-century radical polemicists John Wilkes and John Horne Tooke.⁶⁰

Hone was not the only man to believe that the burning issues of his times were much the same as those of Lilburne’s day. In 1794, as mentioned above, Jeremiah Joyce (1763–1816) had owned a volume of Lilburne pamphlets which subsequently ended up in Hone’s possession. Joyce was a political radical; a Unitarian minister who extolled the virtues of the French Revolution. He worked as a tutor to the children of the Earl of Stanhope, an English aristocrat who, during

⁵⁶ BL, Add. MS 40,113, fols 3r–22r.

⁵⁷ BL, Add. MS 40,113, fols 43r–54r.

⁵⁸ Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, pp. 319, 323, 330.

⁵⁹ *Catalogue of Books, Books of Prints, &c.*, p. 35.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, items 63, 341, 342.

the 1790s, supported the revolutionary government in France and styled himself ‘citizen’. Joyce was involved in distributing pamphlets by Tom Paine in the early 1790s, and was a member of two groups which were viewed with deep suspicion by the authorities: the London Revolution Society (LRS) and the Society for Constitutional Information (SCI).⁶¹ In 1794, he was appointed Secretary to the Joint Committee between his Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society which, incidentally, the young William Hone happened to join two years later. In May 1794, however, at a time of heightened tension, Joyce was arrested, interrogated by the Privy Council, and charged with high treason. He spent time in the Tower, but was released in December after the trials of the first three of his alleged co-conspirators collapsed. It was during this period of incarceration that Joyce kept a volume of Lilburne’s tracts close by his side.⁶² The pamphlets served as a talisman, but they also served as a reminder of the perceived tendency of those in power to trample upon the rights of the populace, as well as a symbol of the belief in the power of the law to thwart tyranny.

After his release from custody, Joyce retreated from active political engagement and made a decent living as a writer of encyclopaedias and popular, none-too-technical scientific manuals and treatises. Joyce died in 1816, and there is no direct evidence that he and Hone ever met, but they did move in the same circles in London and had a number of friends and acquaintances in common: Hone’s acquaintance George Dyer succeeded Joyce as tutor to the children of the Earl of Stanhope, and both Joyce and Hone were close friends of the prominent Unitarian minister Robert Aspland.⁶³ The lack of a direct connection between Hone and Joyce may be nothing more than a quirk of the surviving historical sources: Joyce died in 1816, but the vast majority of Hone’s surviving letters date from after 1818. Whether or not the two men knew each other intimately, or even at all, is immaterial. Their fetishisation, in the 1790s and the 1820s respectively, of a volume of political pamphlets from the 1640s and 1650s demonstrates that the idea of a radical tradition was not simply an anachronistic, ahistorical invention of twentieth-century Marxist historians. Modern scholars are right to stress that there was no trans-historical radical party, no fixed, permanent ‘programme’ for which radicals in each and every age struggled against the same, unchanging enemy. They are right to stress that those men and women from different centuries who fought

⁶¹ J. Issitt, *Jeremiah Joyce: Radical, Dissenter and Writer* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 1–71.

⁶² P. Gregg, *Free-Born John: A Biography of John Lilburne* (London, 1961), p. 397, n. 1. This item had not been among Joyce’s books and pamphlets that had been seized at the time of his arrest, a list of which will be found at The National Archives, London, TS 11/964. The question naturally arises as to which of Joyce’s friends brought the volume to him in the Tower, and whether any of these friends were also interested in Lilburne.

⁶³ On Hone and Dyer, see Bodl., MS Eng. Misc.c.32, fols 23r, 24r, 25r, 27r–v. For Hone’s closeness to Aspland, see BL, Add. MS 40,120, fol. 63r. For the connection between Aspland and Joyce, see Issitt, *Jeremiah Joyce*, pp. 9, 80–81, 86.

against ‘tyranny’ often had entirely different understandings of what they meant by the term.⁶⁴ Yet, it is necessary to realise that radicals of the English Revolution and the early nineteenth century (and, one suspects, radicals in every other era of human history) looked to the past for inspiration, legitimisation and vindication. There is a sense in which these men were manufacturing a tradition for their own uses, but it would be a mistake to assume that only radicals invent traditions for themselves: all traditions – whether radical or conservative, left or right – are shaped, moulded and manufactured by individuals for their own particular uses. It is necessary to stress, however, that such manufactured traditions are not necessarily fabrications. For men like Hone and Joyce, books and pamphlets were, in a sense, time-travellers that crossed the centuries to bear witness to their part in a great, ongoing struggle between liberty and tyranny.

Historians who dismiss the idea of a radical tradition in British history are often insufficiently aware of the rhetorical and polemical strategies which authors chose to pursue, or had forced upon them by considerations of censorship and imprisonment. It is true that one finds very few references to, say, John Lilburne and the Levellers if one searches the titles of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century books which happen to survive in academic research libraries. This does not, however, mean that men and women in later ages were necessarily uninfluenced by, or unaware of, earlier radicals, as has been demonstrated by the examples of William Hone and Jeremiah Joyce. The very real threat of censorship was a strong disincentive to republishing, or quoting from, earlier radical works, but it was not the only reason for the subterranean nature of the radical tradition. It was perhaps much more significant that Hone was a polemicist who was trying to win as many readers as possible to the deeply contentious and divisive concept of Reform. As such, he did not wish to wear his learning on his sleeve; he may even have felt that ostentatious displays of historical knowledge would have been counter-productive. Hone wisely chose not to beat his readers over the head with Lilburne, abstract notions of natural rights, or the history of previous attempts to use the courts to intimidate and punish the opponents of the government. Instead, Hone presented the public with deceptively simple squibs and satires, the titles, form and language of which were invariably drawn from nursery rhymes, children’s games and toys, and the printed and visual ephemera of popular culture. The nursery rhyme that inspired *The Political House that Jack Built* (1819) is well known even almost two hundred years later, but some others need explanation: *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder* (1820) was inspired by a popular didactic toy for girls called ‘The Matrimonial Ladder’ and *The Man in the Moon* (1820) blended together a host of influences from popular chapbooks, ballads, songs, catches and rhymes. By using such sources, Hone was able to present himself as a plain-talking Englishman in conflict with a group of pompous over-educated lackeys who used education and book-learning to mask their parasitic activities. He appealed to the emotions, not the intellect, of the reader, and appropriated the commonplace and

⁶⁴ Burgess and Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism*, pp. 1–12, 62–81, 313–31.

common-sense – words that were, and are, widely associated with a conservative worldview – for a radical purpose. He was certainly trying to compete with and undermine conservative polemicists like Hannah More, who tried to appropriate popular culture and cheap print for their own ends, but at a deeper level he knew instinctively that these genres and formats were the best way to attract a wide audience: the sort of people who, to quote one of the great polemicists of the English Revolution, ‘little regard truths in a serious garb’.⁶⁵

Hone’s trials for blasphemous libel are a striking example of his ability to edit out his radical sources in order to win over particular audiences. It is noteworthy that Lilburne – his childhood hero who had been tried in the exact same building all those years previously – was not invoked once during these trials.⁶⁶ Hone did not mention any of the seventeenth- or eighteenth-century authors one might have expected him to quote or cite in defence of his right to publish the parodies.⁶⁷ He also chose to ignore the copious notes that his friend Robert Aspland compiled for him on the history and conceptualisation of blasphemy.⁶⁸ Instead, the 87 books he deployed in his defence at the trials fall into two main categories. The first consisted of a large number of parodies of religious texts by James Gillray (1757–1815), George Canning (1770–1827), or Robert Southey (1774–1843). Gillray’s beautifully engraved visual prints were produced by an avowed conservative opposed to the French Revolution, and the texts written by Canning and Southey had the benefit of being produced in the 1790s by young radicals who had become deeply conservative establishment figures by the time of Hone’s trial. He believed that all of these sources would be well known to the members of the jury, and envisaged that many of them might have some or all of these works in their personal libraries.⁶⁹ The second category of books Hone cited in his defence came from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There was a reference to a parody of the first Psalm by Martin Luther, and one each from England in the 1520s and 1610s, but the core of this category was provided by Royalist propaganda from the Civil War period.⁷⁰ These items included *The Plague of Westminster* (1647); *Ecce The New Testament of our Lords and Saviours* (1648), which was ordered burned by the

⁶⁵ *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, no. 1 (28 March–April 1648), sig. 1r–v.

⁶⁶ It is necessary to stress that this point contradicts the unsupported assertions of M. Wood, *Radical Satire*, pp. 122–5, and O. Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791–1819* (Oxford, 1984), p. 198.

⁶⁷ See, for example, G. Kemp, ‘Ideas of Liberty of the Press, 1640–1700’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2001).

⁶⁸ Aspland used his extensive researches as the basis for three sermons on blasphemy which he delivered at the Unitarian church in Hackney on 13, 20 and 27 July 1817. He published these sermons as *An Inquiry into the Nature of the Sin of Blasphemy, and into the Propriety of Regarding it as a Civil Offence* (London, 1817).

⁶⁹ *Three Trials of William Hone*, pp. 45, 50, 111, 112, 153, 163.

⁷⁰ J. McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2007).

House of Commons on 23 February 1648; and four humorous ballads from a 1662 collection of anti-Cromwellian songs.⁷¹ This reliance on Royalist propaganda might seem strange in the context of his outspoken attack on the Stuarts at his trials, but he had chosen his examples well. He presented to the Anglican jurors religious parodies in defence of a king which had been produced by men who would have supported the very Act of Uniformity of 1662 which the Attorney General had invoked as the justification for the prosecutions.

Conclusion

This essay has demonstrated that William Hone was much more socially and politically radical than has hitherto been acknowledged, and that he was interested in reforming much more than the system of political representation in Parliament. Indeed, for men like Hone, political reforms may have been less important than legal reforms, or perhaps more accurately, the usefulness of political reforms may have been predicated upon the existence of a fair and equitable reformed legal system. Recent work on radicals and radicalism across the early modern period is to be welcomed in so far as it demonstrates that there was no coherent, stable trans-historical political movement which fought across the centuries for the same demands. It is important not to construct false traditions and continuities by imputing to men and women in the past ideas that they did not, and could not, have held. At the same time, however, one should not ignore the continuities, whether real or merely perceived at the time as being real, in the issues that confronted radicals who looked back in time. A study of print-culture is the key to unlocking the nature and extent of the continuities *and* differences in radical politics across the early modern and modern periods. Every one of John Lilburne's pamphlets which Hone read or owned in the 1820s had existed throughout the almost two hundred years between their first production and Hone's discovery of them.⁷² They were a constant physical presence across the centuries; time-travellers which inspired and enthused Hone, and which he read as evidence that many of the issues of his day were identical to those which had confronted Lilburne: the demand for annual parliaments, the plight of imprisoned debtors, the necessity for free, impartial and courageous juries to protect the fundamental rights of free-born citizens, and the question of how to ensure that when one removed a bad ruler one did not merely replace him with someone who was much worse. There were, of course, discontinuities between the two eras – the centrality of religious experience to seventeenth-century radical discourse is entirely absent from Hone's published works – but it would be a misrepresentation of the past to pretend that Hone and others had no access to, or knowledge of, earlier struggles against 'tyranny'. This chapter has demonstrated

⁷¹ *Three Trials of William Hone*, pp. 29, 30–31, 103, 104, 114–16.

⁷² I owe this point to Michael Mendle, whose forthcoming work will shed much light on the nineteenth-century discovery and use of early modern historical sources.

that historians of radicalism, as well as those who do not believe that such a history exists, need to learn to read texts in much more sophisticated ways than they have hitherto generally attempted: paratext is often at least as important as the text itself. Furthermore, Hone's trials suggest that historians also need to be aware of what radicals consciously omitted from their polemics partly due to fear of censorship, but also in a conscious attempt to reach a wider readership than the traditional market for radical polemic and political theory.

Hone's career as a polemicist and his subsequent apostasy suggest that radicalism is best conceived of not as a continuous 'red thread' spun across the ages, but as a series of moments. Some of those 'moments' overlapped each other, and might conceivably be construed as a form of handed-down tradition. Other radical moments were discontinuous, separated by time and space, and it is only with the factoring in of print-culture that one can see how ideas and ideologies could be transmitted across long chronological periods. One might say that Hone was not a long-distance runner but a relay-racer: he ran with the baton for a period of time before it was passed on to others, many of whom also only ran with it for a short space of time. Sometimes the baton was handed to him by his contemporaries or near contemporaries, but on other occasions he simply picked up a baton that had lain unused for many years, decades, or centuries. The most striking thing about Hone's radical polemics was that they drew on a variety of different sources, some predictable, some highly unconventional, unusual or unpromising. The most potent weapons in the radical arsenal could be fashioned from the most apolitical or conservative of materials. To return to the metaphor of the relay race, the baton he carried was far from the standard specifications laid down by the International Athletics Association. One can only imagine the horror that the Royalists of the English Civil Wars and the anti-Jacobins of the 1790s would have felt at their polemics being used against monarchy and in favour of democratic reform in the 1810s. Hone's career demonstrates that there is no such thing as a radical idea or book *per se*. Books and words have no inherent meaning: a radical book is merely one which is put to a radical use at a particular point in time.⁷³

⁷³ J. McElligott, 'Calibrating Early Modern Print Culture' (forthcoming).



The title-page of William Hone's *The Man in the Moon* (1820).

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