

INTERJECTIONS OF SILENCE:
THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF RADICAL
PROTESTANT WRITING
1642-1660

by

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DEDICATION

To my Father, who understands all this so much better than I.

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ILLUSTRATION

Woodcut from *Divine Fire-Works*, Abiezer Coppe, (1657)
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ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

- C.R.W. : *A Collection Of Ranter Writings From The 17th Century*,
(ed.) NIGEL SMITH, Junction Books, London, (1983).
- D.N.B. : *Dictionary of National Biography*, (19 Vols), Oxford,
(1921-1922).
- GREAVES & ZALLER :
*Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the
Seventeenth Century*, (eds) Richard L. Greaves and
Robert Zaller, (3 Vols), Harvester Press, Brighton,
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(ed.) JACK R. McMICHAEL and BARBARA TAFT,
University of Georgia Press, Athens, (1989).
- F.F.R. : *A Fiery Flying Roll*, Abiezer Coppe,
London, (January 4th , 1650).
- D.F.W. : *Divine Fire-Works*, Abiezer Coppe,
London, (Jan 20th, 1657)

'It may be that universal history is the history of the different intonations given a handful of metaphors.'

Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Fearful Sphere of Pascal' in *Labyrinths*, (trans.) A. Kerrigan, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1970).

'Heresies run on like leaden pipes under ground. They run on still, though we do not see them, in a commonwealth where they are restrained. Where liberty is, they will discover themselves, and come to punishment.'

Walter Strickland M.P. in Robert Burton's *Diary* (1:88)

INTRODUCTION

The English Civil Wars and the subsequent 'interregnum' or 'commonwealth' period have been the focus of much historical study, and recent debate has revealed a two-fold interpretative disjunction, between (roughly) the Marxist synthesis of Christopher Hill, Brian Manning, and A.L. Morton, and 'revisionist' and on the whole more localised studies by John Morrill, David Underdown and Conrad Russell¹. Nicholas Tyacke has done extensive work on the political and theological history of the Church, particularly in the pre-Civil War period, and is featured in Conrad Russell's collection *The Origins of the English Civil War* (1973)². Patrick Collinson has also written in magisterial style on the history of the Church and Puritanism. His essay 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of Popular Culture' is included in *The Culture of English Puritanism*, (ed. Durston and Eales, 1996)³. The repressive conformity required of the people by militant

¹ John Morrill, (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War: 1642-1649*, Macmillan, London, (1982); John Morrill, *Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution*, Oxford, (1974); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War*, George Allen and Unwin, London, (1976)/Longman, London, (1980); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: the People of England and the Tragedies of War 1630-1648*, Longman, London, (1999). David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1985); David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life in an English town in the Seventeenth Century*, Harper Collins, London, (1992). Conrad Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509-1660*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1971); Conrad Russell, (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War*, Macmillan, London, (1973). Conrad Russell, *Unrevolutionary England*, Hambledon Press, London, (1990).

² Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1987); Nicholas Tyacke, (ed.), *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800*, U.C.L. Press, London, (1988). Nicholas Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution' (in) C. Russell, (ed.), *Origins of the English Civil War*, MacMillan, London, (1973), pp.119-143.

³ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, Cape, London, (1967);

Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: essays on English Protestants and Puritans*, Hambledon, London, (1982); Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1982); Patrick Collinson, *English Puritanism*, The Historical Association, London, (1983);

Calvinist Puritanism is examined in David Underdown's *Fire from Heaven* (1992), which concentrates its considerable insight on Dorchester⁴. One other highly localised study I have found particularly useful is John Breay's *Light in the Dales* (1996), which traces both pre-Quaker and Quaker agitation in the contexts of religion and of land tenure⁵. William Lamont's *Godly Rule* (1969) is a valuable study of Puritan attitudes - and pretensions - to governance⁶.

The widely-held belief that the seventeenth century represents a transitional period from feudalism to early Capitalism, promulgated by such theorists as Marx, Weber and Tawney, has been challenged by Alan Macfarlane in *The Origins of English Individualism*, (1978)⁷. The Marx/Weber/Tawney thesis (in brief and sketchy form) is that increased individualism, and thus Capitalistic competition, were fostered by Calvinist theology in an uncertain economic environment, leading to hitherto unknown social mobility in a market economy. Weber can be credited with the origin of the familiar phrase the 'Protestant work ethic'. This thesis is advanced primarily in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930)⁸. Macfarlane contends that there is little substantive difference in the economic situation over a period of 500 years, that a 'developed market and mobility of labour' already existed, 'land was treated as a commodity and full private ownership was established, there was very considerable geographical and social mobility...and rational accounting and the profit motive were widespread' (p.195).

Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religion and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*,

⁴ David Underdown, *Fire From Heaven: Life in an English town in the Seventeenth Century*, Harper Collins, London, (1992).

⁵ John Breay, *Light in the Dales: Studies in Religious Dissent and Land Tenure*, The Canterbury Press, Norwich, (1996).

⁶ William Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603-1660*, Macmillan, London, (1969).

⁷ R.H.Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Murray, London, (1926). Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism*, Blackwell, Oxford, (1978).

⁸ First published (in German) in 1905. His *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism* was published in 1906 and revised 1919-1920. Information from Max Weber, *Selections in Translation*, (ed.) W.G. Runciman, (trans. E. Matthews), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978. Runciman notes 'It would perhaps be more plausible to argue that a necessary condition of the emergence of industrial capitalism was an altogether more general ideological change in the direction of the application of

My own interest is not primarily in economic history, however, and Macfarlane's thesis remains contentious. If a middle position can be sought between Weber and Macfarlane it lies perhaps in seeing Calvinism as neither cause nor effect of economic transformation and the rise of individualism but rather as a source of explanation for the conditions of life which answered to psychological need at the time of its adoption. In such a view it is implicated as both cause and effect, a discursive mode which interacts with and is found suitable for an historical position.

Many historians, including Don Wolfe and John Morrill, have concerned themselves with the tradition of 'Puritanism' within (and beyond) the Church of England⁹. *The Culture of English Puritanism* (1996), edited by Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, is a good collection of recent research in the field, focusing on it as a social phenomenon, and showing it in opposition to a more ritualistic Anglo-Catholicism, or 'Anglicanism'¹⁰. A small but very useful book is R.J. Acheson's *Radical Puritans in England 1550-1660* (1990)¹¹. 'Puritanism' was always, and remains now, a contested term. In common with other labels used to describe novel groupings, or the adherents of unusual social and theological positions, (such as Quakers and Ranters), it was a term applied by those outside the movement or group to those defined as being within it. In short, 'Puritan' arises as a term of abuse, distinguishing those to whom it is ascribed from the generality of Church members. As such it has a shifting, imprecise definition, its general outline can be discerned, but no exact and fixed description of it

rationality to daily life of which the Calvinist ethic was one notable instance.' pp.135-6.

⁹ See note 2 for Patrick Collinson. Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*, Thomas Nelson, New York, (1941); William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism: or The way to the New Jerusalem set forth in pulpit and press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton 1570-1643*, Harper, New York, (1957); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabeth Church*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1982); Liu, Tai, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes*, Associated University Press, London, (1986); Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1987).

¹⁰ Christopher Durston, and Jacqueline Eales, (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700*, Macmillan, London, (1996).

¹¹ R.J. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England 1550-1660*, Longman, London, (1990).

can be given. The term came into widespread use, with generally negative connotations, during the Laudian reforms, when previously orthodox Calvinists found themselves marginalised and forced into opposition. Evidence of distrust for 'precisians' can be found earlier, in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1604), or Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), for example.

Christopher Hill's work takes a broad view of intellectual developments, engaging with the wider trends that may be thought to have contributed to, or be associated with Radical Protestantism, and in *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972) gives a ground-breaking account of the sectarian fringe as expressed through the pamphlet literature of the period¹². This is where I first came across James Nayler and Abiezer Coppe myself. Hill's *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, offers a broad view of many different and perhaps competing trends: the early experimentalism of Bacon and Raleigh, the individualism of Marlowe, Raleigh and the Essex circle's support for a Protestant and expansionist foreign policy first practised in Ireland (with continuing effects to this day), the educational efforts of the independent Gresham College in London¹³. Any direct connection between Bacon and such radicals as Nayler would be hard to argue, however, and it is perhaps for this reason that Hill has aroused such controversy; he seems to conflate antagonistic positions into a seamless narrative of progressive attitudes. His *Experience of Defeat* (1984), which examines how the religious and political revolutionaries coped with the re-imposition of a Monarchy with most of its authority intact, deals with a problem Nayler at least scarcely had to face¹⁴.

Hill's *A Nation of Change and Novelty* (1990) addresses the claims of 'revisionist' historians such as J.C. Davis, John

¹² Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas in the English Revolution*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1975).

¹³ First published in 1965 and revised and republished 1997. Christopher Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1997).

¹⁴ Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries*, Bookmarks, London, Chicago and Melbourne, (1994).

Morrill and Conrad Russell who are suspicious of the broad and long-term view of Marxist-influenced historians¹⁵. Hill is most dismissive of Davis, who attacks Hill and Morton in the belief that their membership in the 1950's of the Communist Party Historians' Group influenced their attitude to the 'Ranters'. Davis' thesis is that the Ranters were a media event, publicised - even created - by Puritan moralists who wished to curtail the freedom of religious expression under Cromwell, and revived by Hill and Morton in order to promote the idea that there was a popular movement towards liberal social attitudes¹⁶. The 'Ranters', never a 'church', or even an organisation, were a loose grouping or tendency among those who considered themselves advanced Seekers, or High Attainers; Seekers who had Found. Davis expends much scholarly energy on dismissing them as 'myth'. Whatever the extent and influence of the Ranters it is plain from what documentary evidence they left (in the main forced denials of extreme theological positions) that there were such people, and that they held, promulgated and even acted on views so outrageous to the seventeenth-century sensibility that they seem almost modern. Davis dismisses the Ranters as a manufactured scapegoat on whom those opposed to religious toleration could project a demonised image of antinomian otherness. However, Laurence Clarkson's account of the secretive group 'My One Flesh' is primary evidence which we have no real reason to doubt, as is Nayler's, who during his final imprisonment refers to 'that

¹⁵ Christopher Hill, *A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical politics, religion and literature in seventeenth-century England*, Bookmarks, London, Chicago and Melbourne, (1993). John Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642-1649' (in) John Morrill, (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War: 1642-1649*, Macmillan, London, (1982), pp.89-114; John Morrill, *Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution*, Oxford, (1974); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War*, George Allen and Unwin, London, (1976)/Longman, London, (1980); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: the People of England and the Tragedies of War 1630-1648*, Longman, London, (1999). Conrad Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509-1660*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1971); Conrad Russell, (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War*, Macmillan, London, (1973). Conrad Russell, *Unrevolutionary England*, Hambledon Press, London, (1990).

¹⁶ The thesis is advanced in J.C.Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, (1986). Davis' awareness of a Puritan backlash bears similarities with Leopold Damrosch's view of the Nayler trial.

Leopold Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. & London, (1996).

old Ranting Spirit'¹⁷. In Davis' defence, it should be noted that the evidence of heresiographers such as Thomas Edwardes (*Gangraena*) is hostile, unreliable, exaggerated, and based on rumour and hearsay. Christopher Hill has responded angrily to Davis' criticism, but is less severe on John Morrill, who he seems to feel concentrates too closely on a narrow field to get a broad view. 'Postmodern' suspicion of the 'Grand Narrative' may be in play here; many contemporary historians prefer tightly localised and specific studies to the general survey favoured by Hill.

A strongly theoretical revisionism finds early expression in *Historians, Puritanism and the English Revolution* by Michael G. Finlayson¹⁸. This is a daring review, based on the perception of continuity rather than violent change in the religious and political forces before and after the civil war and commonwealth periods. He suggests that a fear of 'Papism' rather than any unified 'Puritanism' more accurately describes the opposition to Laud. Here I think I agree; the Laudian reforms created unity in the face of a common enemy. Finlayson also engages with the question of whether the events of 1641-1660 can be accurately characterised as a 'revolution', which would indicate a point of irrevocable discontinuity. Although he declines to adjudicate on the applicability of the term, the basis of his argument is an assumption of continuity, which would seem conclusive. Taking the whole period 1642-1660, it would seem that a revolution (in the seventeenth-century sense of a complete turn of the wheel) did indeed take place¹⁹.

¹⁷ Laurence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found*, (1660) in *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century* (ed.) Nigel Smith, Junction Books, London, (1983), p.180. James Nayler, *To the Life of God in All*, (London, 1659).

¹⁸Michael G. Finlayson, *Historians, Puritanism and the English Revolution: The Religious Factor in English Politics before and after the Interregnum*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo and London, (1983).

¹⁹ Hill discusses 'The word 'Revolution'' in *A Nation of Change and Novelty*, chapter 5, pp.100-120. His position is that it is possible for a concept to exist without yet having become an 'object' of discourse. Annabel Patterson gives the best discussion of 'linguistic anachronism' in 'The Very Name of the Game', (in) *Literature and the English Civil War*, (eds) Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1990), pp.21-38, (p.22).

J.C.D. Clark's *Revolution and Rebellion* (1986) is a frankly partisan (even triumphalist) account of the revisionist attack on 'old hat' and 'liberal' historical traditions from the perspective of an eighteenth-century specialist²⁰. Clark's book, written at the height of Margaret Thatcher's ascendancy in Britain, confirms me in my suspicion that there is something of a projection of contemporary political disagreements back on to the seventeenth-century battlefield within the revisionist project. The Australian historian Alastair MacLachlan's *The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England* (1996) is a slightly less partisan account of the revisionist project which explicitly attempts to historicise the recent historiography of the seventeenth century.

A series of detailed and useful contributions have been made recently to the understanding of the extent of popular reading in the seventeenth-century. Margaret Spufford's inquiry into the 'social diffusion of reading ability' significantly increases both our knowledge and estimates of the extent of rural and non-elite literacy²¹. Her study focuses on Samuel Pepys' collection of 'small books', which post-dates my period. Dagmar Freist and Joad Raymond both argue for the agency of the reader in the interpretation of texts in defiance of the Althusser/Foucault thesis²².

Annabel Patterson's brilliantly argued *Censorship and Interpretation* (1984) investigates the difficult questions of censorship and self-censorship in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The writers with whom I deal are not subject to an undivided or continuous authority, and in their uncertain and polarised social climate rather

²⁰ J.C.D.Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and society in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1990).

²¹ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its readership in seventeenth-century England*, Methuen, London, (1981).

²² If I may so term it. I mean by this the theoretical position that 'discourses determine not only what can be said and understood, but the nature of subjectivity itself, what it is possible to be.' Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, (1985), p.5. Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion*, (1997); Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, (1996). Freist, like Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1983) is influenced by Dell Hymes' 'ethnography of speaking'.

different priorities and loyalties apply²³. The same author's *Early Modern Liberalism* examines the reception of such writers as the Levellers and Locke²⁴. She declares that 'ecclesiastical policy is unveiled as state politics in disguise' (p.247), thereby performing the sort of 'discovery' of which Condren so feelingly complains. What she shows is something of the process whereby a conceptual space for the political was created out of the area between religion and the law. Constitutional disputes, ecclesiastical policy, the legal framework and various different metaphors and precedents are implicated in the ongoing process of contestation which carved out the apparently autonomous, even all-encompassing category 'politics'. Patterson explicitly defends herself against charges of anachronism by declaring 'liberalism' intellectually incoherent (p.4). This might be adduced as a further argument against her thesis. If 'Liberalism' has no fixed identity, then its use might be considered either misleading or uninformative. In identifying Milton's *The Readie and Easie Way* as a founding text of Liberalism, Patterson mentions, but does not seem to take account of the theocratic and unelected nature of the government there proposed (pp.5-6).

While all historians of the period will take some account of the Levellers, Ranters and Quakers are usually regarded as less significant in political terms. James Nayler is a focus of historical interest due to his too-successful imitation of Christ. Most historical surveys of the Commonwealth include some reference to Nayler.

Jerome Friedman in *Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution* (1993) grossly misrepresents Nayler's views and actions²⁵. In dismissing him in one paragraph

²³Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation :the Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisc., (1984).

²⁴ Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1997).

²⁵ Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution: The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies*, U.C.L. Press, London, (1993).

Friedman makes four factual errors. The facts behind such misrepresentation can be explored in the M.P. Thomas Burton's *Diary*, the fullest account of Nayler's trial by Parliament, and in the Newsbooks of the period, usefully reviewed and selected from by Joad Raymond in *Making the News* (1993)²⁶. Mark Kishlansky, who has done important research in *The Rise of the New Model Army* (1979) refers to Nayler as 'John' in his otherwise lucid and concise general historical survey *A Monarchy Transformed* (1996)²⁷.

There are several reviews of the religious traditions which feed into Radical Protestantism. One of these is Ronald Knox's *Enthusiasm* (1950), written with a degree of sympathy surprising from a Cardinal and sometime domestic prelate to Pope Pius XII. Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (first published in 1957), a general historical survey of Millenarian social/religious movements which recounts the unhappy histories of such movements as the Anabaptists of Munster, noting a tendency for an initial libertarian religious impulse to be overtaken by the intolerance generated by a narrow and inflexible interpretation of God's will and purpose. A similar, perhaps more wide-ranging, and generally more sympathetic account of heresiarchs and radical religious groups is *Origins of European Dissent* (1977) by R.I. Moore, which demonstrates that ideas startlingly similar to those of the early Quakers and other seventeenth-century radical sectaries have recurrently surfaced since the earliest records of heresy²⁸. Both Cohn and Michael Walzer in *The Revolution of the Saints* (1966) take Calvinist, or in Cohn's case Millennial, intensity of

²⁶ Thomas Burton, *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq., Member in the Parliament of Oliver and Richard Cromwell from 1656-59*; 4 vols., (ed.) John Towill Rutt, Henry Colburn, London, (1828). Joad Raymond, *Making the News: An Anthology of Newsbooks*, Windrush Press, Moreton-in-Marsh, (1993).

²⁷ Mark Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1979); Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, Penguin, London, (1997).

²⁸ Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1950), this edition: University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, (1994); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, Paladin, London, (1970 edn.); R.I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, (1985); Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, (1966).

belief to be a precursor of fascism and terrorism. It is possible to detect in Milton's *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660) an almost Leninist position on the value of a dictatorship by intellectual cadres, (in Milton's version 'the godly'). From textual evidence we may discover all manner of undemocratic, even irrational political positions in seventeenth-century culture; the 'Divine Right of Kings' springs to mind, as does Richard Baxter's explicit defence of Nero²⁹. The fierce polarities of religious discourse tend to condemn all opposition as satanic, a paradigmatic example of the demonisation of the 'other'. In the specific cases examined below, however, there seems very little which would support accusations of power-seeking.

Interest in the radical fringe of Protestantism in the period has been sustained by collections of Leveller writings and documents edited by D.M. Wolfe, William Haller and Godfrey Davies, who regard them (with some justice) as the forerunners of American religious and political libertarianism, and by the seminal collection *Puritanism and Liberty* (1938), edited by A.S.P. Woodhouse³⁰. D.M. Wolfe's *Milton in the Puritan Revolution* (1941) contains much valuable research on both the Levellers and Gerard Winstanley as well as on Milton himself. H.N. Brailsford's *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (1961) (edited by Christopher Hill) is a fairly partisan but deeply researched and highly valuable study of the activities and influence of the Levellers³¹. Dennis Glover's *Richard Overton: Christianity, Propaganda and the Proto-Proletariat* (1987) is a very useful summary of information on Overton with a valuable bibliography.

²⁹ See W.Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution*, Croom Helm, London, (1979), p.103, p.116, p.300.

³⁰ A.S.P.Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty: being the army debates (1647-9) from the Clarke manuscripts, with supplementary documents*, J.M.Dent, London, (1938); William Haller, *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, Columbia University Press, New York, (1934); William Haller and Godfrey Davies, (eds), *The Leveller Tracts 1647-1653*, Columbia University Press, New York, (1944); D.M.Wolfe, (ed.), *Leveller Manifestos of the Puritan Revolution*, Humanities Press, New York, (1967).

³¹ H.N.Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, The Cresset Press, London, (1961).

A.L. Morton's *The World of the Ranters* (1970) is an early attempt to set that inchoate movement in its context³². Although criticised for exaggerating their importance and numerical strength (a topic on which there is a lack of real evidence on either side) it remains a valuable source of information and insight. Morton gives an account of the influential antinomian preacher John Saltmarsh, generally described as a 'Seeker'³³. Morton also gives fairly full accounts of both Coppe (although he has no knowledge of either *Some Sweet Sips* or *Divine Fire-Works*) and Lawrence Clarkson, perhaps the most materialistic or atheistic of the Ranters, who later became a Muggletonian. *The World of the Ranters* also contains a good chapter on William Walwyn which goes some way towards explaining the violence of the attacks made on him in *Walwins Wiles* (1649) by the Independent Churches, despite Morton's clear sympathy with Walwyn's position.

G.F. Nuttall, over a long period, and more recently Barry Reay, have written extensively on the early Quaker movement³⁴. Still of considerable interest and value are *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (1912) and *The Second Period of Quakerism* (1919) by William Braithwaite³⁵.

Nuttall demonstrates his long commitment to the evocation of unorthodox, revelatory religious experience in such oft-cited works as *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1946) and *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm*

³² A.L.Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, (1970).

³³ Saltmarsh's theological position develops over time, as with so many of the Radical Protestants. Theirs is, above all, an 'experimental' religion.

³⁴ Kenneth Lane Carroll, *John Perrot: Early Quaker Schismatic*, Friends Historical Society, London, (1971). Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, (1946); *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses*, Epworth Press, London, (1967); Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: *a Study in Tradition*, Oxford University Press, London, (1951); Richard Baxter, Nelson, London, (1965). Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, Temple Smith, London, (1985);

Barry Reay, (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, Croom Helm, London, (1985); Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750*, Longman, London, (1988).

³⁵ William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, revised Henry J. Cadbury, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1955); *The Second Period of Quakerism*, MacMillan, London, (1919).

(1948)³⁶. He has also specifically addressed issues surrounding James Nayler in *James Nayler: a Fresh Approach* and 'The last of James Nayler, Robert Rich and the Church of the First-Born'. In the first of these works, published in 1954, Nuttall suggests that Nayler had been influenced by Familism, but specific connections could be drawn between Quakers, Familists, Diggers, Seekers, Baptists, Ranters and other groupings without the necessity for direct influence. Quaker theology at its inception displays marked similarities with all these sects, as well as with social attitudes held by Levellers, peasant resistance to enclosures and impropriations of land, the Cade rebels, German Anabaptism, and so-on, without any direct influence being shown³⁷. It is indeed the useful imprecision of Quaker theology which allowed Quakers such apparently widespread success in the 1650's, combining as it did well-understood social protest against hierarchy in the refusal of hat-honour (a feature of both Digger and Fifth Monarchist social practice), suspicion of the learned, refusal of tithe-payment and a stress on internal revelation which justifies a radical individualism.

The best book I have read on early Quaker theology is Douglas Gwyn's *The Apocalypse of the Word* (1986), which seeks to explain the tone of early Quaker writing by stressing its Millennialist character. Gwyn, as with many Quaker historians, is rather uncritical in his treatment of Fox. More recently, Gwyn has written *Seekers Found*, embracing a number of reluctant bedfellows (such as Caspar Schwenckfeld, William Walwyn, and Gerrard Winstanley) under the term 'Seeker' and, with appropriately eschatological thinking, ushering them into Quakerism. Winstanley may have ended a Quaker, (as indeed may Milton, through his connection with Thomas Ellwood), but Walwyn was 'touchie' at

³⁶ G.F. Nuttall, *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm*, Wallingford, (1948); *James Nayler-a fresh approach*, (Supp. 26 to *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*); 'The last of James Nayler, Robert Rich and the Church of the First-Born', *Friends' Quarterly*, no.60, (1985).

³⁷ A good discussion of the influence of English translations of European mystical texts on Radical thought is to be found in Nigel Smith's *Perfection Proclaimed*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1989), Part II, 'The Culture of Illumination', pp.107-225.

being called a 'Seeker' (as Thomas Edwardes slyly observed) in the 1640's, and decried the excesses of revelation he observed around him in *The Vanitie of the Present Churches*. In detailing Isaac Pennington's 1650 engagement with the Ranters, or 'Mad Folks', Gwyn has done a considerable service³⁸. A detailed analysis of Quaker symbolic behaviour is given in the oft-cited *Let Your Words be Few* (1983) by Richard Bauman, a work which takes the theoretical standpoint of 'the ethnography of speaking', although, of course, we have no actual record of seventeenth-century Quaker speech³⁹. Also among the most often cited works on the language of seventeenth-century England is *The Dialect of those Fanatick Times*, Hugh Ormsby-Lennon's unpublished Ph.D. thesis⁴⁰.

There are biographies of Levellers John Lilburne and John Wildman⁴¹. Margot Heinemann has written on Overton, suggesting an involvement with the theatre⁴². For William Walwyn, the collected works *The Writings of William Walwyn* (edited by Jack R. McMichael and Barbara Taft) (1989) has excellent notes by Barbara Taft to each of the texts included in Walwyn's 'canon', and a good review of the evidence for these attributions. Her introduction is the most comprehensive account I have seen of Walwyn's life,

³⁸ Douglas Gwyn, *The Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox*, Quakers United Press, Richmond, Ind., (1986); Douglas Gwyn, *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience*, Pendle Hill, Wallingford PA, (2000). For a different view of Winstanley's career, see Andrew Bradstock, *Faith in the Revolution: the Political Theologies of Muntzer and Winstanley*, SPCK, London, (1997).

³⁹ Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1983). The general field of the ethnography of speaking has been opened by the work of Dell Hymes, and might be considered a bridge between the fields of sociolinguistics and anthropology. For example: Dell Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: an Ethnographic Approach*, University of Philadelphia Press, Philadelphia, (1974); Dell Hymes, (ed.), *Directions in Sociolinguistics: the Ethnography of Communication*, Blackwell, Oxford, (1986); Dell Hymes, *Ethnography, Linguistics, Narrative Inequality: Toward an Understanding of Voice*, Taylor and Francis, London, (1996).

⁴⁰ Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, 'The Dialect of those Fanatick Times', Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, (1977). Related work by Jackson I Cope is published in the PMLA (vol.71, 1956) 'Seventeenth Century Quaker Style'. This article is also included in Stanley Fish, (ed.), *Seventeenth Century Prose*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1971).

⁴¹ Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John*, Harrap, London, (1961); Maurice Ashley, *John Wildman: Plotter and Postmaster: a Study of the English Republican Movement*, Cape, London, (1947).

education, beliefs and political involvements. Taft's completion of Jack McMichael's project is the single most valuable resource for any study of Walwyn as writer or activist⁴³.

There are no full-length studies of Coppe, but biographical information is contained in Andrew Hopton's Introduction to *Selected Writings* (1987), and in Nigel Smith's *A Collection of Ranter Writings* (1983)⁴⁴. Smith's introduction is highly valuable, and the collection itself, while not comprehensive, is the point of origin for studies such as my own. Recent articles by Nicholas McDowell and Robert Kenny add detail to Coppe's early education and his experience at Oxford, drawing on detailed archival reconstruction conducted by Ann Hughes⁴⁵.

There is no individual study of Richard Farnsworth (or Farnworth), one of the very first Quaker writers, who died in 1666. The fullest account of his life and activities is to be found in the *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*⁴⁶.

The Twentieth Century saw something of a re-appraisal of Nayler, indicating a resurgence of interest in varieties of religious experience. One general characteristic of Quaker historiography is that it tends to be performed by Quakers, who take a partisan view of their subject. M.R. Brailsford and the Swedish psychoanalyst Emelia Fogelkou published in

⁴² Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Middleton and Opposition Drama Under the Early Stuarts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1982).

⁴³ Jack McMichael and Barbara Taft (eds), *The Writings of William Walwyn*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, (1989).

⁴⁴ Andrew Hopton, (ed.), *Abiezer Coppe: Selected Writings*, Aporia Press, London, (1987); Nigel Smith, (ed.), *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century*, Junction Books, London, (1983).

⁴⁵ Ann Hughes, 'Thomas Dugard and his circle in the 1630's', *Historical Journal*, 29:4, (1986), pp.771-793. Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1987). Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *The Seventeenth Century*, 12:2, (1997), pp.173-205. Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Days: The Strange Work of Abiezer Coppe', *The Seventeenth Century*, 13:2, (1998), pp.156-184.

⁴⁶ 'Farnworth, Richard' (in) Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, Harvester Press, Brighton, (1982), Vol. 1, pp.269-270.

the 1920's and 30's respectively⁴⁷. Brailsford holds an orthodox Quaker line, shying away from internal conflicts within the nascent movement and playing down Christological parallels. Fogelkou imposes a psychoanalytical typography on Nayler's life, seeking to account for his actions in Freudian terms, a back-dating of contemporary cultural assumptions which may obscure as much as it elucidates.

The most recent biography is by William Bittle: *James Nayler 1618-1660* (1986), which is thorough, detailed and sympathetic, throwing light on Nayler's crucial stay in London in 1655/6, and adding detail to his dispute with Fox, a dispute which erupted when both were imprisoned⁴⁸. In his conclusion, Bittle attempts to discover why a Parliament involved in vital constitutional negotiations should have devoted weeks to Nayler's trial and sentence at the very time Cromwell was about to dissolve it. I do not feel entirely convinced by Bittle's reasoning at this point: he decides that Nayler was used as an excuse by Parliamentary factions warring over the offer of the Crown to Cromwell, but it is clear that the Nayler case had Constitutional resonances; it is far from certain that Parliament had any Constitutional right to try Nayler, or to impose sentence on him, and it may be that Cromwell thought they did not. Certainly, Cromwellian religious toleration was under attack in the Nayler case.

Leopold Damrosch's *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus* (1996) is not so much a biography as an exploration of the significance of his views, the symbolic entry into Bristol which brought about his trial and the subsequent centralisation of authority within Quakerism⁴⁹. Damrosch's book is sensitive and pays proper attention to Nayler's writings as well as to his 'fall', taking what may be seen

⁴⁷ Mabel Richmond Brailsford, *A Quaker from Cromwell's Army: James Nayler*, Macmillan, London, (1927); Emelia Fogelkou, (trans. Lajla Yapp), *James Nayler: the Rebel Saint 1618-1660*, Ernest Benn, London, (1931).

⁴⁸ William Bittle, *James Nayler 1618-1660: The Quaker Indicted by Parliament*, William Sessions Ltd., York, (1986).

⁴⁹ Leopold Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge: Mass., (1996).

as an anti-Fox line in their conflict. Damrosch perhaps misunderstands early Quaker theology in not sufficiently stressing its Millennialism, and neither does he acknowledge the necessity for greater organisation and a less confrontational style if Quakerism was to survive the hostility it had spawned. After a heady period of expansion any new movement is likely to find need of a period of retrenchment, especially in the face of increasingly hostile authority.

While Nayler's own history has been subject to suppression from within the Quaker movement, and to misrepresentation from outside, George Fox made sure that his own (eminently self-satisfied) view of himself was preserved by the extensive dictation of Journals. Unsuitable documents, such as his 'Book of Miracles', which recounts more than one hundred and fifty miraculous cures Fox claimed by the power of the Spirit have been suppressed, and Fox's role in the early period of Quaker expansion magnified at the expense of others. Disagreements with Nayler, and with other Quakers of more combative inclination, such as Byllynge and Perrot, have been occluded. H. Larry Ingle's *First Among Friends* is the best biography of Fox, in that it rises above hagiography to give a picture of these elisions whilst acknowledging his extraordinary character and influence⁵⁰.

Specific studies of Radical Protestant and Quaker literature are few. Virtually alone is Nigel Smith's *Perfection Proclaimed* (1989), which attempts to discover and analyse lines of influence especially on Ranter tracts by Salmon, Coppe and Bauthumley, and conducts a rhetorical analysis of these writings. Smith, who has also written *Literature and Revolution* (1994), a more general review of literature in the period, displays admirable scholarship in his investigation⁵¹. *Perfection Proclaimed* is the sole full-length work on the Radical Protestants as writers, rather

⁵⁰ H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1994).

⁵¹ Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1989); *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660*, Yale University Press, New Haven, (1994).

than historical curiosities. In three sections, Smith examines the 'sense of self', 'the culture of illumination' and the language of Radical Protestantism, and reveals evidence of his voracious reading of original documents.

Smith's is a seminal work, invaluable on Familism, the thought of Jacob Boehme, and the translation of radical theological works by John Everard and Giles Randall, all of which can be taken to have influenced sectarian and Quaker writing, if not directly then at least through a broader cultural transmission. In Chapter Six, 'Chambers of Imagery', Smith discusses the uses made of a number of metaphors, mostly of Biblical origin, which make up a large part of the discursive resources of Radical Protestantism. Smith describes these uses as 'allegorical'. Chapter Seven, 'Theories of Divine Signification', discusses the ways in which these writers thought the Divine could be understood by man, contrasting the orthodox Presbyterian / Puritan / Calvinist equation of 'the Word' and the Gospel with the radical illuminationist position that the Word was only revealed through, or unlocked by the Spirit operating within. This is highly valuable and scarcely needs repeating; my own intention is to consider texts individually in the hope that I may distinguish among them, rather than bring them closer together in what can seem an undifferentiated continuum. Such an impression is a consequence of the synoptic and synthetic treatment appropriate to a general survey. Although Smith declares "there is no division between fields of evidence and critical approaches which we often define as literary and those we call historical. The two are continuous", it is in the consideration of the specific political and historical circumstances which both generate and permit the unprecedented dissemination of radical theologies that *Perfection Proclaimed* is weakest, a fact which the different approach taken in *Literature and Revolution* goes some way to address⁵².

⁵² Smith, Preface to *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.vii.

Smith has also written on William Walwyn's classical/humanist influences and on Richard Overton's *Marpriest* Tracts. His contribution to the study of the religious radicals of the Civil War period has been considerable⁵³.

Much attention has recently been devoted to the writings of female sectarians of the period, an effort long overdue, and part of a general feminist project of recovering the lost and suppressed voices of women in history. A significant contribution has been made by Hilary Hinds in *God's Englishwomen*, (1996) which also projects back onto seventeenth-century sectarian women's writing the preoccupations of contemporary literary theory. I am ambivalent about the usefulness of such ahistoricism, which seems both unavoidable and distorting, but Hinds' contribution is timely and thought-provoking. Earlier, in 1986, Hinds, in conjunction with Elaine Hobby, Elspeth Graham and Helen Wilcox, edited a volume of autobiographical writings by women that have otherwise been unavailable to the student. Her co-editors of this volume -*Her Own Life*- (1989) have also continued to explore women's sectarian writing, as in Helen Wilcox (et al) *Sacred and Profane* (1995) to which Hobby contributes, and Wilcox's *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700* (1996)⁵⁴. Phyllis Mack's *Visionary Women* (1992) also concerns itself with the prophetesses of the English Revolution and its aftermath⁵⁵. While these writers have no direct bearing on my own study, James Nayler is strongly associated with support for

⁵³ Nigel Smith, 'The Charge of Atheism and the Language of Radical Speculation, 1640-1660' (in) *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, (eds) Michael Hunter and David Wootton, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1992); 'Richard Overton's Marpriest Tracts: Towards a History of Leveller Style', (in) *The Literature of Controversy: Polemical Strategy from Milton to Junius*, Frank Cass, London, (1987).

⁵⁴ Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox, *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, Routledge, London, (1989); Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, (1996). Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649-1688*, Virago, London, (1988); Helen Wilcox, *Women and Literature in Britain 1500-1700*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1996); Helen Wilcox et al. (eds), *Sacred and Profane: Secular and Devotional Interplay in Early Modern British Literature*, Free University Press, Amsterdam, (1995).

dissident Quaker women, notably Martha Simmons, and made the error of raising one Dorcas Erbury from the dead whilst both were incarcerated in Exeter Gaol. Coppe's *Some Sweet Sips* includes an excerpt from a letter by a 'Mrs. T.P.', a prophetess of whom we have no other certain knowledge⁵⁶.

There are also literary-critical writings which engage with the 'Puritan' heritage, often credited with an influence on the emergence of the novel. Joan Webber, in *The Eloquent 'I'* (1968) undertakes sensitive close reading of various seventeenth-century authors from differing social and religious backgrounds, and pays welcome attention to the inter-relation of form and expression. While Webber is honest enough to note that there is 'no Seventeenth Century mind', she nevertheless tends to generalise from the particular, portraying Bunyan and Donne as representatives of 'the Puritan' and 'the Anglican'. The stylistic comparison between these authors is certainly startling, but it does not all result from their affiliation to one particular form of Protestantism. Webber's insistence on binary stylistic categories fits comfortably enough with Bunyan, who after all may be considered the exemplar, and thus definition, of the 'Puritan' style, they are less comfortably suited to John Lilburne, whose 'Puritanism' bears decreasing traces of predestinarian theology over time, and is often as political and constitutionalist as religious in both tone and concerns. The case is similar with Burton, in whom psychological interests and critical classicism serve to align him with Donne far more than any religious conviction. Such categorisation succeeds in pointing out, but not in defining or explaining the disjunctions of style noticeable between the dense and allusive prose of the University-educated elite and the

⁵⁵ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, University of California Press, Berkeley: CA, (1992).

⁵⁶ I can find no evidence to support any identification. She may be Thomasina Pendarves of Abingdon, wife of Baptist minister John Pendarves, who was himself later engaged in a controversy with James Nayler (see Nayler's *An answer to some queries put out by one John Pendarves*, (London, 1656)), but the association is not made in Maureen Bell, George Parfitt and Simon Shepherd, (eds), *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers 1580-1720*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, (1990).

erupting 'plain style' of the less formally educated. Such a disjunction could equally be described in class terms, and to further complicate matters there are Anglican churchmen who could fairly be described as 'Puritans' in theological terms, and many lower-class sectarian radicals who modify or reject Calvinism. Lilburne, who commenced a famous career in trouble with authority by importing 'Anabaptist' tracts, and who ended his life as a Quaker, may fairly be considered such a one.

Of literary critical works, perhaps Stanley Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (1972) comes closest to defining my own view of Quaker writing, not that it deals with Quaker writing at all⁵⁷. Fish states 'A self-consuming artefact signifies most successfully when it fails, when it points away from itself to something its forms cannot capture. If it is not anti-art, it is surely anti-art for art's sake because it is concerned less with the making of better poems than with the making of better persons.'⁵⁸ All this is undoubtedly true of Quaker writing, perhaps truer than it is of those forms of which Fish treats. Fish also proposes a novel form of 'reader-response' theory, which opens the successive, time-bound nature of the act of reading to examination.

The fastidious Thomas Corns, in *Uncloistered Virtue* (1992), addresses the writings of the Commonwealth period, concentrating mostly on Milton, but with a chapter on 'Levellers, Diggers and Ranters'⁵⁹. I find him slightly unfair to John Lilburne, whom he regards as obscuring general principles under personal and circumstantial detail, and accuses of displaying a '...lack of range and sustained skill [which] probably wearies all but the most dogged present-day reader...' (p.140). This may be true, but disregards the purpose of the tracts, and ignores Lilburne's clear personal popularity as defender and representative of

⁵⁷ Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: the Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*, University of California Press, Berkeley; (1972).

⁵⁸ Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, Introduction, p.4.

⁵⁹ Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue : English Political Literature, 1640-1660*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1992).

the individual's legal rights and liberties. Lilburne wrote in response to specific circumstances, for a contemporary audience. Corns is better on Winstanley, noting a tripartite stylistic development in his writing, distinguishing pre-Digger, Digger and post-Digger texts. He describes Winstanley's theology as 'materialist', although it is in many respects highly spiritual. (Winstanley's explanation of Christ's rising from the dead and ascension to heaven is one of spiritual rebirth within the Apostles, rather than any physical resurrection and physical ascension to a new dwelling beyond the clouds). The division materialist / spiritualist seems difficult to sustain in the climate of seventeenth century religious belief. Winstanley certainly stresses the possibility of a paradisaical reorganisation of the social and economic world, but he is definite in his assertion that this is to be achieved through the action of the spirit, rather than through any direct action by the Diggers beyond their appropriation and cultivation of common land. Similarities between the positions of Winstanley and the Quakers are striking, although this does not concern Corns. He makes an interesting comparison between the Digger and Quaker term 'imagination' and the 'Marxist notion of ideology' (p.169)

Corns also discusses the 'Ranters', spending some time on the Hill/Davis debate and on the likely authenticity of the anonymous *The Justyfycatjon of the mad crew* (1650), a question he decides not to determine on. He praises Bauthumley, repeating John Carey's assessment in the Foreword of Nigel Smith's *A Collection of Ranter Writings*, '...a neglected masterpiece of seventeenth-century devotional prose' (p.2), and he also considers Salmon's *A Rout, A Rout*, noting its specific appeal to the soldiery of the New Model Army, and that it 'persistently engages the immediate political context' (p.185). He praises Lawrence Clarkson's *The Lost Sheep Found* as having 'an engaging power of narrative, a vivid, Nashean imagery' (p.181), but decries Clarkson's perceived failures of theological exposition in his *A Single Eye, All Light* (1650). This seems to me a little unfair, in that Clarkson's aim is plainly reductive;

he actively seeks to reduce all emanations of the godhead to a single, morally neutral and apparently materialist conception.

Coppe's oeuvre is described as 'an aggressive and simultaneously ludic idiom' (p.187), which seems accurate enough. In his brief review of Coppe's preface to *Divine Teachings* and the two *Fiery Flying Rolls* Corns brings out some of Coppe's utterly individual characteristics as a writer: the tension between extreme seriousness and wild playfulness that has led many to regard him as mentally unstable, his unsettling relation to language as a system of signs, and the instability of his writing persona. Comparisons with Nashe might seem more appropriate here than in connection with Clarkson. Corns does not engage with the recantations, nevertheless describing them as 'full and explicit', although they remain defiant on certain points at least.

Michel Foucault's exposition of a theory of power articulated through 'discursive formations' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) has influenced much Cultural Materialist and New Historicist criticism. Foucault's disembodied and all-pervasive 'power' has marked affinities with the 'spirits' of James Nayler, or the symbolic personalities of Abiezer Coppe, similarly interrogating the notion of a unitary 'self' possessed of free will⁶⁰. Roger

⁶⁰ J.G. Merquior, in *Foucault*, Fontana, London, (1991), describes Foucault's characterisation of 'power' thus: 'By means of a rhetorical personification, power has been essentialized so as to absorb all agency' p.145, which is to say it is reified as an object of discourse. 'Nominalisation' or 'reification' is a pervasive form of metaphor, whereby processes and actions are refigured as states and objects. This creation of entities ('discourse' is another popular current example) is a cultural habit which seems to be both unconscious and misleading. Nominalisation simplifies and shortens expression (it is not necessary with its use to define every process), but it leads to the objectification in discourse of unexamined and imaginary 'entities', which are then taken to be real and understood. This seems startlingly close to the 'spirits' of James Nayler (see below) and to Coppe's allegorical or 'typical' figures. For David Green 'This process of infusing mental abstractions with material existence is called reification....it accustoms people to think of such abstract concepts....as things that have a real existence and can therefore be defined 'correctly'...Politicians compete to define labels on their own terms...shaping their publicly accepted meanings becomes central to the process of shaping public political consciousness.' David Green, *Shaping Political Consciousness: the Language of Politics in America from McKinley to Reagan*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca: New York, pp.2-3. Also

Chartier's re-evaluation of Foucault's contribution to cultural history usefully reintroduces the human agency which Foucault's concentration on 'power' elides⁶¹.

Nigel Wheale's *Writing and Society*, (1999) includes a review of recent debates in social and cultural history in a thoughtful discussion of the significance of texts⁶². His study gives welcome and justified attention to the writings of William Walwyn and Gerrard Winstanley (among others) and to the importance of the years 1642-1660 in extending the market for printed material.

Two books which deal with the emergence of rationalistic and experimental science through a literary frame are *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (1985) by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, and *The Matter of Revolution* by John Rogers (1996)⁶³. Both are interesting explorations of the metaphorical basis of our understanding of the world, and have at least a tangential relevance to my subject.

Shapin and Schaffer pay due attention to the style of writing developed by Boyle and fellow members of the Royal Society in their attempt to establish the experimental paradigm as the basis of scientific thinking, and a form of discursive authority to support it. It is clear, I think, that Hobbes' conservative authoritarianism develops in reaction to the perceived excesses of religious 'enthusiasm', and Boyle's insistence on the collective and consensual nature of scientific 'proof' can equally be seen as a corrective to a culture of personal revelation which justifies radical individualism, even subjectivism. Such subjectivism is patently present in Donne's *Songs and*

significant is Annabel Patterson's splendid article 'The Very Name of the Game' (in) Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday, (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1990), pp.21-37.

⁶¹ For example Roger Chartier, *Cultural History*, (tr. Lydia G. Cochrane), Polity/Blackwell, Cambridge and Oxford, (1985).

⁶² Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print and Politics in Britain, 1590-1660*, Routledge, London, (1999).

⁶³ Steven Shapin & Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, (1985); John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution : Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca: N.Y., (1996).

Sonets, incidentally, and is not to be considered the exclusive preserve of sectarians⁶⁴. Much of this reaction inheres in the style of Boyle's discourse, with its wealth of circumstantial detail, and its insistence on the replicability of experimental results⁶⁵.

Rogers too examines scientific texts, especially William Harvey's accounts of both the circulation of the blood and the insensitivity of the heart. Close attention is paid to the competing metaphorical frameworks within which Harvey interprets and expresses his insight. Although Royal Physician, Harvey vacillates between a centralised, authoritarian paradigm of the heart as King, and a 'democratic' depiction of the blood itself as the motive power in its circulation, a perspective Rogers terms 'Vitalism'. This 'Vitalism' he proceeds to relate to the political vision of such writers as Milton and Winstanley. These symbolic depictions, the 'metaphors we live by', are of great importance in understanding the world-views available to any culture or historical period⁶⁶. While Rogers' view of 'Vitalism' gives insight into the writings of Harvey and Milton, I find his views on Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House' less convincing, and any erection of political theory on the consistently mysterious 'Nymph complaining...' seems thoroughly misconceived. Rogers identifies in Winstanley his peculiar blend of passivity and

⁶⁴ I would class such well-known poems as 'The Sunne Rising', (in *The Complete English Poems*, (ed.) A.J. Smith, Penguin, London, (1986), p.80) as examples of 'subjectivism', as they place the feelings of the writing persona above the objective reality of the situation described. The position adopted is emotionally true, but objectively absurd. Donne is, I believe, aware of this; it is deliberate, and part of his intended effect.

⁶⁵ On Boyle, see J.R. Jacob, *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution*, New York, (1977); M.C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, Harvester, Hassocks, (1976).

⁶⁶ All language is metaphorical, and as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue, metaphors are basic structural elements of our world-view. Halliday's 'grammatical metaphors' are ways of depicting events which he sees as being not 'congruent', but all depiction involves assumptions embedded in language and consciousness, and is crucially dependent on a point of view established within language. People constantly describe or explain one thing in terms of another. Discursive strategies may be organised or validated by reference to some set of central metaphors or paradigms, such as the evolutionary view derived from Darwin, the related metaphor of 'the market' and the metaphor of competitive sport which interacts with both. This alliance of metaphors brings together the discourses of science, economics and sport, a powerful combination,

direct action, but conflation of this with 'Vitalism' seems a step too far. It is probably more to do with the Millenarian eschatology of the radical fringe than any scientific theory or social metaphor. Rogers also fails to recognise shifts in the tone and attitude of Winstanley's writing which Corns identifies.

Rogers' case, insightful and wide-reaching, perhaps stands or falls by his assertion that '...the period's organizational imperative [was] the contemporary intellectual pressure to formulate a natural philosophy from which a political philosophy could be derived-' (p.110)

Clement Hawes' *Mania and Literary Style* (1996) is one of the few literary-critical works which attempts the integration of revolutionary sectarian writing with the history of literature in any specific way. His thesis is that the adoption of a 'manic' style is a politically motivated gesture, both enabling the licence traditionally afforded to the 'mad' and challenging accepted rules governing the formal production of texts and discourses, rather than a symptom of mental pathology⁶⁷. As his exemplar he takes Abiezer Coppe, whose remarkable style is frequently noted, almost always in association with a diagnosis of mental disturbance, and compares his work with Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704, possibly written 1702), a clear parody of sectarian or enthusiastic writing which also satirises the literary production of 'Grub Street', a market production, driven by economic necessity⁶⁸. This contrives to associate the manic with his contemporary adversaries in political, religious and cultural fields. For Hawes, this affirms a congruence noted by Hill, Weber, Thomas, Haller and countless others between Puritan or Dissenting writers and the emerging forces of capitalism, experimental science

currently irresistible. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, (1980).

⁶⁷ Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: the Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1996).

⁶⁸ It may be of some interest that John Taylor ('the water poet') wrote a satire on sectarian preaching called 'The Tale of the Tub' which prefigures the explosion of 'mechanic preaching' much as Swift recalls it.

and mass culture. Any such association can only be drawn in the broadest terms; it is hard to feel that Coppe has much interest in science⁶⁹, or scientists (still less capitalists) in Coppe. Their connection is within the astonishingly fertile, indeed paranoid satire of Swift, or results from the synthesis of various 'progressive' strands of seventeenth-century culture by historians. No self-respecting Puritan could acknowledge Coppe a fellow-believer either. Nevertheless, Hawes draws connections between *A Tale of a Tub* and Coppe which seem suggestive if not explicit, and mounts a spirited case against Coppe's medicalisation. The links between the pamphlet literature of the Commonwealth period and the emergent print culture to which Swift stands in a paradoxical relation (both opposed and implicated) are clear.

The best recent account of the psychological impact of Calvinism on the believer is *The Persecutory Imagination* (1991) by John Stachniewski. Stachniewski takes a Foucaultian, 'discourse' oriented view in his discussion of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), *Grace Abounding...* (1666), and *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) by John Bunyan, and seeks to rectify some common misunderstandings of the election/reprobation dynamic of Puritan discourse⁷⁰. In short, predestined election does not make life comfortable for figures such as Bunyan: Calvin states that the only certainty of election lies in an unbroken assurance of it⁷¹. Stachniewski is severe on this cruel dichotomy, and uses his insight into the psychology of Calvinism to elucidate Bunyan's allegorical figures of Doubt, Despair and Despond. Stachniewski takes issue with Fish's 'reader reception' interpretation, emphasising the fear of predestined reprobation - a condition utterly incapable of alteration - over the certainty of election. *Pilgrim's Progress* is then the story of the triumph of certainty over doubt, but the

⁶⁹ Although it would be interesting to know in what manner Coppe practised medicine.

⁷⁰ John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1991)

⁷¹ John Calvin, *The Institution of the Christian Religion*, (trans.) T. Norton (1561); *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (trans.) H. Beveridge, Edinburgh, (1863).

dynamic of the text is the result of the tension between these two polarised states, the eventual outcome being always uncertain to the individual involved.

Puritan and non-conformist literature abounds in examples of the terrifying death-bed doubts of committed believers, and such doubt is utterly fatal. This psychological pressure may lead to the much-publicised but comparatively rare examples of Antinomianism in seventeenth-century England, the slightly more orthodox response of the Quakers, or the 'radical Arminianism' identified by Hill with such figures as Milton. Stachniewski's account, whilst unequivocally partial in its condemnation of Calvinism, is both sensitive to the psychology of the believer and deeply engaged with the culture of the period. It is in his exploration of the internal psychological effects of Calvinist theology that Stachniewski makes his most telling contribution, bringing home something of the urgency and pressure generated by such an unforgiving and all-embracing belief-system.

Recent Post-graduate research in the Civil War and Commonwealth periods has shown interest in the same questions of religious belief and political commitment, and an encouraging desire to explore this remarkable field of writing. In 'Radical Possibilities: Literature in the English Revolution 1640-1660' Brian Patton investigates challenges to the hierarchies of rank and gender and the responses to them, culminating in a discussion of the political uses made of the marriage metaphor⁷². In 'The Polemical Body', Cheryl Thrash examines the applications of the contrasting Galenic and Paracelsan models of the body in medical practice and medical metaphor. This is particularised in the dispute between Thomas Edwardes (author of the popular catalogue of affronts against religion *Gangraena*) and William Walwyn. An interest in medicine is certainly marked in the lives and writings of Walwyn and Coppe, and metaphors of disease and decay in

⁷² Brian Patton, 'Radical Possibilities: Literature in the English Revolution 1640-1660', Ph.D. diss., University of Western Ontario, (Canada), (1993).

Gangraena convey Edwardes' fear and distrust of what others, such as Walwyn and Milton, saw as a flowering of debate. The clash of different forms of medical discourse is reminiscent of John Rogers' argument in *The Matter of Revolution*⁷³. Joseph Black, in 'Pamphlet Wars', explores the long-term influence of the Marprelate Tracts, and the uses made by them from different polemical positions. Black's work thus explores a field opened by Hill and Smith⁷⁴. 'Writing the Apocalypse, 1649-1660', by Mark Houlahan, likewise examines the long-term cultural legacy of a particular work, in this case the even more deeply ingrained influence of the 'Book of Revelations'. That most troubling, and troublesome, text is a highly significant reference point for seventeenth-century religious and political discourse, and its influence is visible in several of the works I discuss, providing much of the conceptual framework within which Coppe and the Quakers could express their Millenarian conviction of the imminent and inevitable transformation of self and society⁷⁵. In 'The Rise and Fall of the English Republic in 1659' Ruth Mayers investigates the revival of Levellerism and Republicanism on the recall of the 'Rump Parliament' to power. This thesis attempts to view 1659 in its own context, without knowledge of the Restoration of the Monarchy, and it succeeds in diminishing the aura of inevitability that surrounds historical fact⁷⁶. 'The English Roots of William Blake's Radical Vision' by Marc Standish explores the tradition of Radical Protestantism in Blake's poetry and thought, citing tracts by Diggers, Ranters and Muggletonians as influences on his work⁷⁷.

⁷³ Cheryl Thrash, 'The Polemical Body in Seventeenth Century Toleration Tracts, 1641-1647', Ph.D. diss., Emory University, (1993).

⁷⁴ Joseph Black, 'Pamphlet Wars: The Marprelate Tracts and 'Martinism', 1588-1688', Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, (Canada), (1996).

⁷⁵ Mark Houlahan, 'Writing the Apocalypse, 1649-1660', Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, (Canada), (1989).

⁷⁶ Ruth Mayers, 'The Rise and Fall of the English Republic in 1659', Ph.D. diss., Washington University, (1998).

⁷⁷ Marc Standish, 'The English Roots of William Blake's Radical Vision', Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, (1994). The thesis has something in common with E.P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law*, Cambridge University Press,

The 'Radical Protestants', (as the more extreme elements associated with the parliamentary/puritan alliance in the Civil War have come to be called), have been studied as a source of political and social ideas by historians, especially since the middle years of the last century⁷⁸. Reviews of their writings have been largely synoptic, an approach that was necessary to cover a broad and often neglected field⁷⁹. In tandem with synopticism, strategic readings have been employed which seek to disclose in Radical Protestantism the ancestry of particular social and political positions⁸⁰. Such approaches have tended to stress similarities among these writings, where a closer examination would reveal the many shades of difference. In order to redress such imbalances, this thesis is intended to contribute to a necessary and continuing investigation of the Radical Protestants as writers of individual interest and distinction, giving detailed attention to particular

Cambridge, (1993).

⁷⁸ For example: Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*, Thomas Nelson, New York and London (1941); William Schenk, *The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*, Longman Green & Co., London, (1948); William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*, Columbia University Press, New York, (1955); Don M. Wolfe, (ed.) *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution*, Cass, London, (1967); Joseph Frank, *The Levellers: a History of the Writings of three Seventeenth-Century Social Democrats*, Russell and Russell, New York, (1969); Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1975).

⁷⁹ See for example Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (1975); Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1989); Thomas Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature, 1640-1660*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1992). There have been some exceptions, with collections of the writings of Gerard Winstanley by Sabine and Hill, and a study of the remarkable legal and constitutional writings of John Warr by Sedley and Kasdan. G.H. Sabine, (ed.), *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, (1941); C. Hill, (ed.), *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1973); Stephen Sedley and Lawrence Kasdan, (eds), *A Spark in the Ashes: the Pamphlets of John Warr*, Verso, London, (1992). Also of interest is Hill's much criticised study of Winstanley: C. Hill, *The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley*, Past and Present Supplement no.5, Past and Present Society, Oxford, (1978), this essay is also included in *Collected Essays, Vol. Two, Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*, Harvester Press, Brighton, (1986), pp.185-252.

⁸⁰ Mildred Ann Gibb, *John Lilburne the Leveller: a Christian Democrat*, L. Drummond, London, (1947); Eduard Bernstein, (trans. H.J.Stenning), *Cromwell and Communism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution*, Allen and Unwin, London, (1930); republished by Spokesman, Nottingham, (1980); C.B.MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1962); Joseph Frank, *The Levellers: a History of the Writings of three Seventeenth-Century Social Democrats*, Russell and Russell, New York, (1969); Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1997); Fenner Brockway, *Britain's First Socialists: the Levellers, Agitators and Diggers of the English Revolution*, Quartet, London, (1980).

works by particular authors rather than reviewing the field as a whole. I take as my examples William Walwyn, Abiezer Coppe, Richard Farnsworth and James Nayler, who exemplify the variety and diversity of expression available within Radical Protestantism. Their different styles and approaches can be seen as inscribing a narrative of radical aspiration and disenchantment in the period.

Each is a highly individual and powerful writer who proposes radical versions of both self and society. Each was imprisoned, and all but Farnsworth had writings burned by the common hangman. Their views remain at the extremes of social experience. As the possibility of reformation through collective political action receded after 1647, egalitarian and utopian aspirations increasingly came to be expressed through the internalisation and allegorisation of Biblical precedent, and the transformation (even perfection) of the individual through the rising of Christ within the self became the means by which a broader reformation of society was to be achieved. The Millennium was increasingly figured as spiritual and psychological rather than, or as well as, physical and temporal. Biblical precedent came to be treated both as an hermeneutic for the decoding of contemporary events and as a map of internal psychology, a template for the understanding of the present and the self as well as for the expression of that understanding.

Much has been written on the period 1640-1660, a time when a crisis in religious, political and social consensus, coupled with the resultant breakdown of control of the presses, allowed the expression in print of startling and heterodox views. This eruption of publication, much of it emanating from outside the University-trained elite, has been taken as a point of origin for a variety of social structures and political developments which would be unrecognisable to the mid seventeenth-century. Walwyn condemns both politics and art, yet I at least consider him a politically committed artist. The truly decisive effect of this period is in inaugurating a mass print culture in England, without which an age of constitutional democracy could scarcely be

imagined⁸¹. Much was imagined in these twenty years, particularly in the first decade of Civil War and Commonwealth, from 1642-1652. Levellers and Diggers *did* envisage whole new systems of governance and social organisation, although these are not easily translated into modern political positions. Different relationships with the divine were proposed by Seekers, Ranters and Quakers.

All writing embodies social attitudes, and style and content are interdetermined elements of literary production. No writing is without both social and aesthetic concerns. In the course of my study I have found particular areas of interest in these writers; their negotiations with sin, their relationships to language and the textual rendition of voice, and their strategies of 'authorisation'.

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The writers who form the subject of this thesis are 'Antinomian'; that is they consider Christ's sacrifice sufficient to have atoned for original sin, and his message to have superseded the Mosaic Law. For Walwyn, this means that gratitude to God for the gift of Grace will ensure everyone's obedience to that Law. Coppe, in contrast, implies that those who know God are beyond the reach of sin; in effect that those in possession of grace can behave however they wish with impunity⁸². Nayler's position is that by following the example of Christ, almost by becoming Christ, one may conquer inherent sinfulness; but to follow Christ is of course to avoid committing sin.

There is more to sin, however, than its personal significance to these writers, although each has an interesting antinomian alternative to Calvinistic assertions of universal sinfulness. Sin has a social significance. The

⁸¹'England underwent an almost tenfold expansion of print after 1640.' Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II 1660-1685*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington: Kentucky, (1996), p.5. See also David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1980) p.47. Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society*, Routledge, London, (1999), p.6.

⁸² This is sometimes called 'practical antinomianism'.

fact that Coppe's retractions are concentrated on theological rather than political points might indicate that theology was the chief concern of those in authority. In view of the inclusive nature of *A Fiery Flying Roll's* condemnation, a wholesale attack on propriety, hierarchy, spiritual pride, greed and hypocrisy, this insistence on one aspect of the *Roll's* catalogue of outrages seems notable. What is at stake is the central peg of the social order, the one thing that can ensure obedience to a moral code even after the beheading of the body politic. Sin is what really matters to the Godly; without the internalisation of sin there seems little possibility of social cohesion, one might say social control.

Walwyn and Nayler at least are not frustrated artists, and Coppe would probably consider art of merely secondary importance, a matter of 'forms'⁸³. This is not art at its point of origin, not even art by other means, although it is made with what we may legitimately consider aesthetic concerns; if anything it is anti-art: for these writers art cannot contain truth, it is inadequate for the significance and urgency of their message⁸⁴.

However, each of these writers has a particular relationship to literature and to drama in particular. Walwyn, despite the influence of Montaigne, is not entirely essayistic⁸⁵. He has an astute awareness of the importance of voice in his writing. His tone is generally rational, conversational, as one reasonable man to another. This tone is more in tune with current sensibilities than the extremes of Coppe or the Biblical patchworks of the Quakers. Walwyn's tone is not consistent, however; he adopts different positions in order

⁸³ There is a long tradition of distrust for art within Protestantism, particularly Puritanism, where it is often associated with idolatry, as reflected in Walwyn's comment on 'the adulterate allurements and deceivings of art' (*The Power of Love*, in *The Writings of William Walwyn*, (eds) Jack McMichael and Barbara Taft, The University of Georgia Press, Athens: Georgia, and London, (1989), p.82). Hereafter called Taft. All further references to Walwyn are to this edition.

⁸⁴ 'Art' is not what it was, of course, but Nayler expressed a particular horror of drama, and even of the singing of psalms by those unaware of their full meaning.

⁸⁵ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, (trans. John Florio), (London, 1603), especially

to appeal to different audiences, and he uses dramatic strategies in order to preserve the vitality of the voice within the text. Coppe's writing, especially in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, is highly vocal, and where it is not it is often epistolary or parodic⁸⁶. Coppe engages in a number of experiments with form and delivery. Nayler too participates in this combination of orality and textuality, his writing being both deeply concerned with textual issues (often involving laborious point-by point rebuttals of anti-Quaker polemics) and strikingly oral in form, full of the cadences of preaching.

Voice has two principal significances in these writings; firstly, for the writer and audience it provides one of the main forms of authorisation for their opinions: striking the right tone is vital to convince a reader (or hearer, as tracts are generally considered to have been read aloud rather than silently and alone) that the writer has the right to deliver a message from God. Secondly, in order to transmit the living voice within the text these writers sometimes employ dramatic techniques; Walwyn's imaginary hecklers in *The Power of Love* (1643), his closet drama *A Parable, or Consultation of Physitians upon Master Edwards* (1646) (possibly showing the influence of Overton), the Socratic dialogue of *The Compassionate Samaritane* (1644); Coppe's rendition of the voice of God, his typical characters 'the Holy Scripturian Whore', or 'Wel-Favoured Harlot'⁸⁷ and 'the young man devoid of understanding'.

Coppe's characterisation of the Holy Scripturian Whore is in a line of satire on religious pretension stretching back at least to Chaucer and Langland. Not only the recent explosion of Leveller pamphlets but also the condemnatory fulminations of Protestant divines of the Reformation treat of greed and

Book 1 Chapter 30, 'Of the Caniballes'.

⁸⁶ On the parodic element of Epistle III of Coppe's *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine* (1649) see Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *The Seventeenth Century*, Volume XII, No.2, Autumn 1997, pp.173-205, and below, pp.95-141.

⁸⁷ Derived from Nahum 3.4, for the prophet a symbolic representation of Nineveh.

hypocrisy in similar terms. Hugh Latimer is one example⁸⁸. Only Coppe's decision to pronounce judgement not only in the name but in the voice of God exceeds his precursors. All satire is founded on the basis of a common position with the reader, and much of Coppe's writing is best understood as moral satire.

The self-conscious irruptions of dramatic *form* in Radical Protestant pamphlet literature spring in my view more from the writers' awareness of their writings as vocal, as performance, than from any desire to emulate a dramatic tradition⁸⁹. Walwyn explicitly condemns art in Puritan terms. Nayler opposes all forms of entertainment - 'invented pastimes, which is idolatry'. Nevertheless, the voice in the text requires of these writers techniques that will keep it vivid, present and real. Such formal elements therefore spring rather from similar needs than from specifically literary influences.

Coppe's relationship to language is perhaps the most complex. He seems to find linguistic expression more problematic and constricting than Walwyn; he is plainly and frankly aware of the inadequacy of language for the expression of revelation. Despite this, he gives the impression of loquacity, and clearly has considerable linguistic facility. Coppe is also unusual in the context of

⁸⁸ Hugh Latimer (1485?-1555), Bishop of Worcester, born Thurstaston, Leicestershire. Celebrated in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' as a Protestant martyr. He preached against the continued practices of pilgrimages, relics and other 'Popish' customs. Attacked clerics who did not preach in his sermon 'Of the Plough' in Jan. 1548. Burned to death as a heretic in the Marian persecution, Oct. 16 1555. (*D.N.B.*, Vol XI, p 612-622). His sermons are vigorous and humorous, and were frequently reprinted; the collection *Fruitfull Sermons* was printed by Thomas Coates for the Company of Stationers in 1636, when it would clearly have fitted well with anti-Laudian and anti-clerical publications from the Puritan wing. Other editions of this collection were published in 1572, 1584, 1596, 1607 and 1635.

⁸⁹ Overton's *Canterburie*, his *change of Diot*, *The Arraignment of*, Walwyn's *A Parable*, the dialogic elements in *Power of Love*, and *The Compassionate Samaritane* constitute works in dramatic form. I realise that my attitude here runs counter to the suggestion of Margot Heinemann in *Puritanism and Theatre: Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1982) that at least Overton and Thomas Harris had been involved with the theatre before the Civil War. I do not dispute Heinemann's evidence in this regard, but each case is individual, and both Walwyn and Nayler are explicit in their condemnation of 'art' as a form of lying.

Radical Protestantism in that he had a University education. Nayler shares something of Coppe's uncertainty about language, expressed through the Biblical distinction between letter and spirit.

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I am generally suspicious of the tendency to impose modern and ahistorical theoretical perspectives on the writings of a previous era. Nevertheless, it is necessary for me to clear some space among competing viewpoints. Although it may be a form of heresy to assert it, I have not wished to make a strategic reading of these writings, thus engaging them in further conflict on the contemporary battlefields of historiography and literary theory over and above the debates of which they were themselves constituent.

However, it seems that such argumentative texts as these, which issued into and contributed to the development of an increasingly fractured social arena, cannot avoid provoking dissension even after three hundred and fifty years. A bitter argument between Christopher Hill and J.C. Davis over the status of the Ranters still reverberates⁹⁰. Such an example should serve as a warning, rather than an encouragement, to scholars.

In his work on the seventeenth century Conal Condren depicts the political as an arena (or discursive field) constrained and 're-described' by the competing pressures of the Law, Religion, and Natural Philosophy⁹¹. This is a subtle analysis; indeed it seems to me that 'politics' are something that other people have and do in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England - Walwyn's contempt for

⁹⁰ J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1986); Christopher Hill, *A Nation of Change and Novelty*, Bookmarks, London, Chicago & Melbourne, (1993), especially the furious riposte (including three postscripts) in Chapter 9, 'Abolishing the Ranters'.

⁹¹ Conal Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*, MacMillan, London, (1994). For one view of the attempt to create an alternative metaphorical basis for the understanding of natural history in the light of political developments see John Rogers, *The Matter of*

'Polititians' is excoriating, but from our perspective he was himself prominently engaged in Civil War politics. Condren wisely remarks that 'tradition' is used by all sides as a means of validating their positions, and that innovation was generally regarded with suspicion: Coppe's enthusiasm for newness and strangeness is rare and unpopular in his own time⁹². With 'tradition', it is all a case of what particular tradition, or interpretation of tradition, one espouses: Coppe and the Quakers, like many others, invoke Biblical history in their support; Levellers stress a pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon heritage or birthright⁹³. As a group, Levellers have been claimed as forefathers of Socialism, Social Democracy, Christian Democracy, Liberalism, and free-market Capitalism, as revolutionaries and as businessmen⁹⁴. They are also Christians, one should not forget, 'born again' for the most part, and thus possibly ancestors of the 'New Right', or precursors of 'liberation theology'. In this light the history of their interpretation is probably more significant than what they believed: few if any of the positions outlined above would be recognisable to them. One must be careful not to project back reified political categories onto historical realities, categories that have only crystallised out or arisen in the more recent past. In Condren's words,

our entrenched classifications create a grid of political oppositions which we have reified and yet into which the evidence does not happily fit

Revolution: science, poetry and politics in the age of Milton, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, (1996).

⁹² Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*, (1994), p.159.

⁹³ The use of Biblical precedent is not at all confined to 'Radical Protestants', or indeed 'Puritans'. Royalist uses of Biblical precedent, from John Cleveland to the Christological parallels of *Eikon Basilike* (1649) (the posthumous defence attributed to Charles I) are equally widespread, relying largely on the Old Testament association of Royal and Divine power established by King David.

⁹⁴ C.B.MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1962); Joseph Frank, *The Levellers: a History of the Writings of three Seventeenth-Century Social Democrats*, Russell and Russell, New York, (1969); Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1997); Fenner Brockway, *Britain's First Socialists: the Levellers, Agitators and Diggers of the English Revolution*, Quartet, London, (1980); Mildred Ann Gibb, *John Lilburne the Leveller: a Christian Democrat*, L. Drummond, London, (1947).

any more than it sits easily with our assumed canons of historicity.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, what we mean by 'conservative' and 'radical' has some purchase on the seventeenth century, since it is we who are looking, and we cannot entirely abandon our own means of understanding and set aside the intervening centuries when addressing historical texts. Texts are changed by time because they are read differently over time. They are read with intentions, and through discourses, which their writers would find alien, perhaps incomprehensible. Clearly, some sort of balance has to be struck here by each individual scholar, and each is likely to draw the line in a different place⁹⁶.

There was a huge dispute conducted both over and by means of collective nouns in the period. Part of the strategy of the heresiographers was to describe each novel or unorthodox theological position as the mark of a different 'sect'⁹⁷. I realise that the 'Radical Protestants' may not have been radical or even Protestants in their own eyes, or the eyes of their opponents (much as the Levellers were self-avowedly not 'levellers'⁹⁸) but the term at least delineates a certain area, or the appearance of one. For my own part, I hope that my study may go some way to unpacking this category, and distinguishing among its contents. Like 'Puritan' of long dispute, it is a term with some nominal, relational function in defining a group of writers. The terms applied to these writers in their own time were also terms in and of dispute.

Recent studies of the print and communicative culture of the seventeenth century have revealed something of the process

⁹⁵ Conal Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*, (1994), p.165.

⁹⁶ For brief accounts of New Historicist thinking see Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, Routledge, London, (1995); John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, (1998); a collection of essays is H. Aram Veaser, (ed.), *The New Historicism Reader*, Routledge, London, (1994).

⁹⁷ Best known is Thomas Edwardes, *Gangraena*, London, (1646).

⁹⁸ As on the title-page of *A Manifestation* (1649), in Taft, p.335: 'A Manifestation from Lieutenant Col. John Lilburn, Mr. William Walwyn, Mr. Thomas Prince, and Mr. Richard Overton, (Now Prisoners in the Tower of London) And others, commonly (though unjustly) Styled LEVELLERS.'

whereby 'public opinion' and 'politics' became acceptable, or at least unavoidable. David Cressy's valuable study *Literacy and the Social Order* (1980) increased estimates of the extent of popular literacy through examination of the records of the Protestation Oath of 1641⁹⁹. For Margaret Spufford 'the political and religious ferment of the Civil War in itself led to a heightened level of debate in the countryside, and to interest in print.'¹⁰⁰ Tessa Watt, in *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* (1991) conducts an interesting survey of both popular culture and Protestant 'iconophobia', concluding that a change in the limits of the acceptable in religious iconography occurred more gradually than had previously been suggested¹⁰¹. She also argues that the skills of reading and writing should be considered separately, indicating a readership far higher than an assessment of writing ability would suggest. Joad Raymond reviews the history of the Newsbook, very much coeval with the pamphlet literature I examine, in *The Invention of the Newspaper* (1996)¹⁰². His study is both penetrating and widely based; particularly relevant is Chapter Four, 'Paper Bullets: Newsbooks, Pamphlets and Print Culture'. The 'outbreak' of the Newsbook is seen not solely as the result of a breakdown of central control over the presses, but also partly as a strategic propaganda decision by each side in the preparations for Civil war, and partly as a result of a growing market for information about the progress of hostilities¹⁰³. In *Governed by Opinion*, Dagmar Freist stresses the breakdown of consensus rather than a relaxation of censorship as a cause of increased publication¹⁰⁴. This is certainly valid, but the abolition of Star Chamber and the

⁹⁹ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1980), p.65.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England*, Methuen, London, (1981).

¹⁰¹ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1991). The view she contests is expressed in Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625*, The Ford Lectures 1979, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1982).

¹⁰² Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1996).

¹⁰³ I discuss one of William Walwyn's contributions to Parliamentary propaganda below, pp.44-51.

¹⁰⁴ Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London 1637-1645*, Tauris Academic Studies, London & New York, (1997).

Court of High Commission clearly did nothing to discourage unlicensed printing. Where Condren sees the nascent discourse of the 'political' as besieged by the competing claims of religion and the law, Freist observes 'the penetration of politics by print and oral cultures' (p.301). Both Raymond and Freist delineate something of the process whereby a space for the political was made within English culture. It is my contention that the increasingly vituperative use of arguments based on the Bible contributed to a partial withdrawal of its hegemony over the 'political'¹⁰⁵.

In any case, it would be unwise to imagine that productions sanctioned by authority fully describe the possibilities available within culture. The history of heresy would indicate otherwise. Stephen Greenblatt's discussion of 'the real' indicates that there may rather be a refiguring than a supplantation of cultural understandings. Greenblatt, in discussing Slavoj Zizek's exposition of Lacanian sublimity, suggests just this refiguration in a typically rarefied and tangential essay which is largely concerned with the well-known Protestant critique of the theory of transubstantiation¹⁰⁶.

For Zizek, the sublime object of ideology is what Lacan termed the Real: at once a hard kernel resisting symbolisation and an entirely chimerical entity, impossible to grasp except by tracking its traumatic effects. The object most worthy of theoretical reflection, the object around which the subject is structured, is precisely the one that, while it continually invites the overwhelming desire to see, seize, and digest it, cannot in fact be securely located, measured, inventoried, or experienced in any of the ways that we normally associate with objects. Without the Real there can be no symbolic order: in one sense, the Real precedes symbolisation which serves to feed off its primordial fullness, carving up its incomprehensible wholeness into consumable units of meaning. Yet in another sense the Real is the excess that always escapes this process of

¹⁰⁵ See 'Nayler versus Baxter', pp.284-341.

¹⁰⁶ See: Slavoj Zizek, *Everything you always wanted to know about Lacan (but were afraid to ask Hitchcock)*, Verso, London, (1992); *The Zizek Reader*, (eds) Elizabeth and Edmund Wright, Blackwell, Oxford, (1999).

meaning-production and is therefore produced by it, since it can only be known in and as such excess.¹⁰⁷

Greenblatt goes on: 'For Renaissance England, the sublime object of ideology is a piece of bread.'¹⁰⁸ (p.338)

Coppe at least would disagree. The description offered above seems closer to his feeling about or understanding of God. *That* transcendent and ungraspable object cannot be contained in either language or materiality, both of which Coppe sees as systems of signs for something beyond, which precedes them and gives them meaning. Coppe's absolute contempt for 'formal' disputes about the correct way of breaking bread is made eloquently plain in the savage irony of this little closet drama (the speaker is Coppe's 'wel-favour'd Harlot'.)

And on the first day of the week, when the
Saints meet together, to break bread, do not
thou omit it upon pain of damnation.

By no means omit it, because thou hast Gospell
Ordinances in the purity of them.

--Papists--they give wafers.-

Protestants--give--to all ith' Parish tagg ragg,
and his fellow if they come.

But we are called out of the world, none shall
break bread with us, but ourselves, (the Saints
together, who are in Gospell Order.)

Besides the Priests of England cut their bread
into little square bits, but we break our bread
(according to the Apostolicall practise) and
this is the right breaking of bread (saith the
wel-favour'd Harlot.)

(*F.F.R.* in *C.R.W.* p.114)

I agree with what Greenblatt seems to imply, if not his too absolute narrowing of focus at this juncture in the essay.

¹⁰⁷Stephen Greenblatt, 'Remnants of the Sacred in Early Modern England', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, (eds) De Grazia, Quilligan and Stallybrass, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1996), p.338.

¹⁰⁸It is not for nothing that the term 'Early Modern' often substitutes for 'Renaissance' in discussions of this period, the former implying its own forward-looking, progressive teleological narrative, the latter standing for a nostalgic revivalism and an exaggerated respect for 'the Ancients' which is to be supplanted by 'the Enlightenment'. I cannot now begin unpacking the loading of *that* interesting term.

The implication I read is that the writers of the 'Renaissance' and those of the late twentieth century share similar concerns, which they frame within different views, or discourses. There is a marked and demonstrable plurality of discourses in the late twentieth century. A widespread contention, among writers as different in every other way as Catherine Belsey and E.M.W. Tillyard, seems to be that no such plurality, seated in the conception of individuality, existed in previous historical eras. This seems to me entirely unprovable, and based largely on a lack of written evidence¹⁰⁹. Contrary evidence could never have been produced under the conditions of pre-licensing and self-censorship which existed in pre-revolutionary England, and it is therefore not possible to judge whether ideas such as those of the Radical Protestants may have been in circulation, although there are the suggestive traces of Grindletonians and Familists.

It is through a technique of verbal excess that Coppe succeeds in conveying, so far as he can, the uncontainable, 'unsearchable' nature of that impulse which precedes and eludes the attempt to express. The concentration of linguistically inclined twentieth-century thinkers on language as both more than a representational tool and a less than adequate one is as much a re-focussing and repetition of seventeenth-century thinking as it is anything new. From this perspective, Greenblatt does indeed present us with remnants of the Sacred. In my view, refigurations of a dominant metaphor (or 'map') can take at least two forms; firstly, people will reiterate the previously understood in new terms, and secondly old terms connected with declining cultural forms will be used to express new concepts.

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*, Methuen, London, (1985), especially Section 2, 'Unity', which suggests that only one form of consciousness was possible for the people of the Middle Ages on the evidence of a very few didactic religious play texts. E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Chatto and Windus, London, (1943) presents a view of a unified and uncontested culture which may be partly explained by a context of world conflict. Both views share a quite unwarranted nostalgia for what seems almost pre-lapsarian innocence. Bakhtin's whole discussion of Biblical parody in Section III of 'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' weighs against any assumption of a unified cultural view having existed in some previous era. M.M. Bakhtin,

Greenblatt's reiteration of Zizek is an example of the latter, where the mystical terminology of religion is re-employed by linguistic psychology. For Annabel Patterson 'The questions of agency that political theorists and historians ask restate in secular terms the questions of free will versus predestination that seventeenth-century thinkers at all economic and educational levels posed themselves.'¹¹⁰

Since Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Wittgenstein, language has increasingly been placed as the analogue of Coppe's material world, and the material world, the real, in an equivalent position to Coppe's ungraspable God; language has become the site of a shared intuition of the inadequacy of self in the face of life. Human concepts, both views tell us, are inadequate to deal with the complexities of the ever changing (perhaps one might as well say never-changing) 'real'.

*

I have also drawn on theoretical perspectives suggested by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin¹¹¹. Bakhtin's 'Dialogic' approach has several uses in considering disputational literature, which has both persuasive intentions and dialogic elements.

The pressures of disputation generally require authors to refute their opponents rather than allowing other opinions equal weight. Bakhtin's approach stresses 'the dialogic nature of language', its social context and use, in terms of

'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp.41-83.

¹¹⁰ A. Patterson, 'The Very Name of the Game', (in) *Literature and the English Civil War*, (eds) Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1990), pp.21-38, (p.35).

¹¹¹ Mikhael Bakhtin, (probably also Volosinov, V.N.) a Russian critic and theorist whose work stressed the importance of the social context of language use as opposed to its structural objectivity. Works in translation include M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (trans. M. Holquist and C. Emerson), University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, (1981); M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, (trans. Caryl Emerson), Manchester University Press, Manchester, (1984); *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*, (ed.) Pam Morris, Edward Arnold, London, (1994); Volosinov, V.N., *Marxism and the Philosophy*

'a struggle among socio-linguistic points of view'¹¹². While acknowledging the Saussurian view, Bakhtin concentrates on the experiential and social uses of language ('parole' in Saussure's analysis) rather than the structural, systemic view ('langue') on which Saussure concentrates (as do his many disciples in literary theory). The field of Sociolinguistics shares Bakhtin's interest from a different and later perspective.

My own position is close to Bakhtin's in his conviction that

the study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract "formal" approach and an equally abstract "ideological" approach. Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon - social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning¹¹³.

His perception of language as the site of social struggle is entirely appropriate to disputational literature, and his interest in festive parody has a direct and specific relevance to Coppe's *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine* (1649), Epistle III, the subject of some recent critical interest¹¹⁴.

Bakhtin also proposes different 'Chronotopes', or ways of regarding time in the Novel, one of which, the 'Eschatological', has clear parallels with the millenarian attitudes of Coppe and Nayler. In Bakhtin's 'eschatological chronotope' (which he associates with Langland's *Piers Plowman*) 'the real future is drained and bled of its substance.....it matters only that the end effect everything that exists, and that this end be, moreover, relatively

of Language, (trans. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik), Seminar Press, London and New York, (1973).

¹¹² Mikhael Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', (p.273), in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (ed.) Michael Holquist, (trans. Caryl Emerson and M. Holquist), University of Texas Press, Austin: Texas, (1981).

¹¹³ Mikhael Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, (p.259).

¹¹⁴ Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', in *The Seventeenth Century*, XII: 1, Spring 1997, pp.173-205.

close at hand.'¹¹⁵ Some of this is certainly true of the millenarian Coppe of 1649, and of James Nayler and Richard Farnsworth in the 1650's. A hollowing out of the 'real' future might be one way of regarding the displacement of concrete hopes of reform onto the rising of Christ within the individual¹¹⁶.

For Bakhtin, one's language is inevitably and intrinsically involved with one's conception of the world.

For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. ... All words and forms are populated by intentions.¹¹⁷

This social view of language is to some extent mirrored in the approach of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a wide field, approached from many directions. Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Critical Linguistics, Stylistics and Linguistic Philosophy all have an input¹¹⁸. The field 'Discourse' also attracts interest from Social Psychologists such as Derek Edwards, Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, and from Critical Psychologists such as Ian Parker, who see it as a new paradigm for the study of the social construction of reality and of the individual¹¹⁹. Such an array of approaches inevitably throws up different ways of describing the same linguistic objects, and seemingly incompatible ways of viewing similar phenomena.

Some credit for the recent enthusiasm for this approach must go to Michel Foucault, who used the notion of discourse to

¹¹⁵ M.M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.148.

¹¹⁶ This 'displacement' is itself an interpretation, however, and the 'narrative' or 'trajectory' I propose in this introduction would not be the view of those involved.

¹¹⁷ M.M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.293.

¹¹⁸ Raphael Salkie, *Text and Discourse Analysis*, Routledge, London, (1995). Stephen Levinson, *Pragmatics*, Cambridge, (1983).

¹¹⁹ Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter, *Discursive Psychology*, Sage, London, (1992).

Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour*, Sage, London, (1987). Ian Parker, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, Routledge, London, (1992).

cast a strange new light on social mechanisms¹²⁰. For Foucault, discourse constructs both the 'subjects' and the 'objects' of social life, leaving little room for individual human agency¹²¹. A purely structural view of social practice seems to exclude aspects of human experience we feel to be important. If the 'subject' is constituted by discourse there seems little likelihood of a discourse changing over time, as Foucault shows that it does. One factor here is the contest between discourses. Religion and Economics hold radically different views of the world, different ideologies. The contrast of such discourses as they compete over an issue enables comparison of different ways of 'wording' a situation, opening the possibility of rejecting both. Conal Condren's view of seventeenth-century 'politics' as being constrained by the competing discourses of law and religion is a possible example of this in concrete historical terms¹²².

Potter and Wetherell, with Foucault, see such subject positions as unavoidable traps for the receiver, but we do not always believe what we read in the papers. At a deeper level however (as in the 'Sapir/Whorf hypothesis'), the range of ways we have of speaking about something restricts our points of view on it.

A text not only 'has' or 'expresses' meanings, but it presents a way of regarding those meanings. Form and content, style and meaning are not independent elements which combine in a text, but aspects of the same process of argument or persuasion. As Mikhael Bakhtin, Norman Fairclough and others indicate, the writer portrays world-view and attitude to events within language without any necessity for conscious effort¹²³.

¹²⁰This is particularly true of his earlier writings; see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Tavistock Press, London, (1970); *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock Press, London, (1972).

¹²¹ Criticism of this approach can be found in Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, (trans. Lydia G. Cochrane), Polity/Blackwell, Cambridge and Oxford, (1988), and J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, Fontana, London, (1985) & (1991).

¹²² See above, p.32, n.83.

¹²³ M.M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*.

Equally, there is no neutral language in which to give an uncoloured picture of 'facts'. Each form of language use instantiates its own pre-suppositions, and seeks to impose them on the receiver¹²⁴. Language embodies viewpoint without conscious effort being required. However, in the cases at hand we have every right to expect that much conscious effort has been exerted in order to achieve particular effects.

Both the field of Discourse Analysis and Mikhail Bakhtin's 'dialogic' approach indicate the importance of closely-focussed textual analysis as an accompaniment, if not corrective, to the more generalised studies that have dominated the study of Radical Protestantism hitherto. Susan Wiseman has taken New Historicism in general and Stephen Greenblatt in particular to task over an habitual deployment of non-canonical texts as 'shocking' and 'marginal' introductions to an analysis of canonical texts¹²⁵. It is very much my desire to contribute to a project of giving non-canonical texts serious consideration. Nigel Smith has stated 'We must begin to rewrite the biographies of the radicals in terms that are appropriate to the sorts of

N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, Polity Press, Cambridge, (1986).

P. Simpson, *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, Routledge, London, (1993).

¹²⁴On the 'presuppositions' and 'entailments' associated with all language use, see Stephen Levinson, *Pragmatics*, Cambridge, (1983). Language requires presuppositions of its users, which may be logical or existential. Existential presuppositions are triggered by change of state verbs (stop, kill), factive verbs (regret, discover, realise), and cleft sentences (It was Fred that....ate the hamster). The entailments of a proposition are what it states about the world. Pragmatic presuppositions (for example the idea that narration is or should be chronological) are not 'grammatical' but depend on shared conventions. For Potter and Wetherell (n.119 above) a statement requires of us certain assumptions so that we may interpret it and grant it truth value as a proposition. Here we are close to Psycholinguistics and its 'truth conditions' and to linguistic philosophy as well as Social Psychology. The discussion of entailments and presuppositions as inherently embedded in linguistic operations informs the idea that language use creates 'subject positions' for the listener within discourse.

¹²⁵ Susan Wiseman, 'Porno-Political Rhetoric and Political Theory in and after the English Civil War', (in) *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution*, (ed.) James Holstun, Frank Cass, London, (1992), p.135 & n.6 p.154; Stephen Greenblatt, 'Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play', (in) *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, (1980), pp.193-221.

knowledge they were able to deploy'¹²⁶. I hope that my study may go some way to distinguishing among the Radical Protestants, too often regarded as a homogenous group.

My study engages with a very limited number of texts. This is a necessary result of the close reading I have attempted. Such a limited range of texts has prompted many regrettable exclusions: the list of texts and authors not included here is almost infinite. I particularly regret the omission of Abiezer Coppe's *A Fiery Flying Roll*, the writings of John Warr, Gerrard Winstanley, Joseph Salmon, Laurence Clarkson, *Tyrannipocrit Discovered*, Isaac Penington's engagements with Ranter theology in 1650, to mention only a few. In defence of my choices, I can only say that each is a self-sufficient and significant piece of writing. I have tried to use texts which are available in reprints, although this has not been possible for the early Quakers. I do not know if the selection is 'representative' in any sense; in one way it is various: it tends to distinguish among very different writers rather than give any impression of a united radical voice. In another, it is narrowly partial: these writers are all to be located at the extremes of contemporary debates; the consistently negative response of whatever authority, however constituted to these writers, both as producers of their writings and as active workers for the principles there expressed justifies a continued perception of them as 'Radicals'. The debate over terms is unproductive: our meanings are a matter of usage. All the terminology applied in the field is disputed, then as now; indeed, they are terms of dispute in themselves, little more than opprobrious nicknames.

My intention is to address the writings of the Radical Protestants in their own terms and context, and by detailed close reading to come to a better understanding of the motivations, beliefs and techniques of their authors. Both

¹²⁶ Nigel Smith, 'Atheism and Radical Speculation', (in) *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, (eds) Michael Hunter and David Wootton, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1992), p.158.

context and *texture* are vital aspects of text. Indeed, text may be considered the point of interface between them.

WILLIAM WALWYN

William Walwyn, a merchant and supporter of the Parliamentary alliance at the outbreak of Civil War gained a considerable (if not altogether favourable) reputation as a pamphleteer and organiser of the Leveller party. The 'Levellers' were a group of writers and activists of varied religious backgrounds who coalesced around the highly public figure of John Lilburne and a broad programme of constitutional and practical reforms in the years 1645-1650. Drawing support from a shifting coalition of Baptists, Independents, Republicans and Army Radicals they sought to influence Parliamentary policy through direct appeals from the populace, collecting signatures on a large scale in support of their petitions. Although their petitions were ignored, and their leaders imprisoned by Parliament, they were a serious enough political force to have representatives included in the Putney Debates of 1647, where the Army Council met to discuss their political policy and a possible constitutional settlement at a time when Parliament and Army were opposed. The Levellers, there represented by Edward Sexby, John Wildman, William Allen, Maximillian Petty and a group of 'agitators' elected from within each regiment, and supported by Colonel Thomas Rainborough, were opposed in their constitutional aspirations by Cromwell and (at great length) by his son-in-law Henry Ireton. Although the debate ended inconclusively the Army gradually came to adopt the strategy of Republicanism advocated at various times by all Levellers, if not the Constitutional programme they advanced based on the principle of 'equity'. Agitation in the Army was first suppressed by Cromwell at the rendezvous at Ware, and finally crushed at Burford, with the civilian Leveller leadership imprisoned in the Tower.

The name 'Leveller' is itself an accusation, explicitly rejected by those to whom it was - and is - applied. Gerrard

Winstanley, on the other hand, described his utopian community as 'the true Levellers', but is known to posterity as the leader of the Diggers. To be a leveller in the broad sense would be to advocate the complete 'levelling of mens estates', to support the abolition of private property, hereditary privilege and (presumably) economic inequality. Such a position was not adopted by those we call Levellers, but was nevertheless used against them in the propaganda of their Presbyterian and Royalist opponents. Winstanley *did* advocate such a radical programme; it is implicit in Abiezer Coppe's millennial vision, and implied at least within the rhetorical coverts of Quakerism.

The Leveller programme was sufficiently innovatory in its time to be judged wildly extreme. It varied in its details over time, indeed debate continues over the extent of the franchise they proposed, but among their central and reiterated demands are an extension of the vote, a unicameral legislature with a fixed term, equality for all under the law, the rendition of all laws into English, and an unregulated economy without unfair monopolies¹²⁷. Central to Leveller ideology is the demand for religious toleration.

Chief among Leveller writers are John Lilburne, Richard Overton and William Walwyn, but other contributors to their cause, or writers associated with them, include Edward Sexby, John Wildman, Henry Marten and John Warr. Each has his own distinctive style and interests.

All three principal Leveller writers have a pre-history of publication, and continue to publish from post-Leveller perspectives, Walwyn in defence of trial by jury (1651), in support of free trade (1652), and as a purveyor of medicines (1654-1669), and Lilburne (once) as a Quaker (1656). Overton continued to conspire against Cromwell's rule with Sexby and Wildman, and returned to pamphleteering in 1659 at the fall

¹²⁷ Leveller proposals were advanced in petitions addressed to Parliament, and reiterated in Walwyn's *Gold Tried in the Fire; or, The Burnt Petitions Revived*, (1647).

of Richard Cromwell before disappearing from the historical record.

By general consent, William Walwyn is the most sweetly reasonable of Leveller writers. He owes this reputation perhaps to his use of Christian/Humanist models such as Pierre Charron and Montaigne, a frame of thought which still finds a place in twentieth/twenty-first century writing¹²⁸. It is much more to current tastes than the religious fundamentalism of Presbyterian or Quaker writing. Walwyn's reasonableness was not clear to all in his own time, however, and his conviction that all forms of belief can be enquired into and require justification led to accusations of atheism from his opponents which are contradicted by his own writing¹²⁹. By his own account, despite an appearance of rationalism, Walwyn's faith is at root as unreasonable as (for example) Abiezer Coppe's, dependent as it is upon inner conviction.

Walwyn was born in 1600 into the landed gentry. His family had land in Worcestershire, near Great Malvern. His father Robert's second wife was the daughter of a bishop, Herbert Westphaling, Bishop of Hereford. He was apprenticed in 1619 to a silk merchant, and married Anne Gundell in April 1627. He became a master weaver, and in 1632 a merchant, having been 'made Free of the Merchant Adventurers Company'¹³⁰.

¹²⁸ Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdome*, (trans) Samson Lennard, London (pre-1612), (facsimile reprint Amsterdam, 1971). Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, (trans) John Florio, London, (1603).

¹²⁹ Doubts over Walwyn's religious convictions, as expressed in *Walwyn's Wiles* (1649) are still advanced by David Wootton, (ed.), *Divine Right and Democracy*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1986), p.272. I'm not sure what I could do to convince him, where Walwyn's *The Power of Love* (1643) has failed.

¹³⁰ Details of Walwyn's life and thought can be found in *The Writings of William Walwyn*, (eds) Jack R. McMichael & Barbara Taft, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, (1989), pp.1-51; Joseph Frank, *The Levellers*, New York, Russell and Russell, (1969), pp.29-39; William Haller, *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, Columbia University Press, New York, (1934), pp.35-45, 56-63, 92-94, 107-110, 115-118, 121-127; A.S.P.Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty: being the army debates (1647-9) from the Clarke manuscripts, with supplementary documents*, J.M. Dent, London, (1938) p.54; Joseph Frank, *The Levellers: a history of the Writings of three seventeenth-century Social Democrats*, Russell and Russell, New York, (1969), pp.41-63; Wilhelm Schenk, *The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*, Longman, London, (1948), pp.41-63. See also Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*, Thomas Nelson, New York and London, (1941).

In terms of religious observance, Walwyn, unlike either Lilburne or Overton, was not a separatist, and remained an active and loyal member of his local church, despite his unorthodox interest in the beliefs of sectarians and his close association with various religiously radical individuals. Walwyn admits to 'Antinomianism', but this is not of Coppe's variety, which implies the abrogation of the Mosaic Law - even the abolition of sin - rather it is based on the doctrine of Free Grace, which we might term more justly 'Arminian'. Walwyn's Christianity stresses practical charity and the 'golden rule', (that one should treat others as one would wish to be treated oneself). He is determined in his support for those of less orthodox religious associations, and even goes so far as to praise Islam (*Walwyns Just Defence*, p.26).

It is *Walwyns Just Defence* (1649) that gives us most autobiographical information too, as well as a touching portrait of John Lilburne which throws some doubt on Walwyn's sole authorship of *A Manifestation...* (1649). *Walwyn's Just Defence*, written during his imprisonment in the Tower with Lilburne, Overton and Thomas Prince, is a response to *Walwyns Wiles* (1649). That pamphlet is a personal attack on him, probably itself in response to Walwyn's *The Vanitie of the Present Churches* (1648/9), which was highly critical of the Independent, 'Gathered' Churches, formerly a source of support for the Leveller position. Agitation by Independents against Walwyn may have begun because of Walwyn's attitude to the raising of a new Regiment to garrison the Tower of London. Certainly Cromwell, a leading Independent, had by this time decided that the Levellers represented a threat to the delicate balance of forces which would preserve a semblance of political order. By late 1649 the consensus of support for a Leveller programme of reform had broken down, and was never to be recovered. Instead, each of the individual religious groupings within the Parliamentary faction sought individual advantage in the wake of the execution of the Monarch.

Although Walwyn is praised for his temperate tone, *The Bloody Project* (1648), *The Vanitie of the Present Churches* (1648/9), *The Fountain of Slaunder Discovered* (1649), and *Walwyns Just Defence* (1649) reveal a sterner judgement, occasioned by his doubts about the renewed hostilities of the second Civil War (*The Bloody Project*) and a campaign of personal denigration, rumour and scandal directed against him.

Walwyn is credited with the authorship, in whole or part, of some twenty-seven political and religious works from 1641's *A New Petition of the Brownists* to 1652's *W. Walwyn's Conceptions; For a Free Trade*. After this he writes four medical works, in support of his business as a supplier of medicines, a business he continued after the Restoration. Walwyn died in 1680/1.

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BEFORE THE LEVELLERS: SOME CONSIDERATIONS.

1642

Increasing hostility between King and Parliament gave rise to sporadic clashes between armed bands throughout the summer of 1642, and civil war was formally opened by the raising of the royal standard at Nottingham on the twenty-second of August. Charles had failed to seize strategic assets including the magazines at Kingston-upon-Thames and Hull early in the year, and had retreated from Whitehall. Attempts at moderating between the two factions had collapsed. Charles' attempt to seize the 'five members' on January fourth whilst simultaneously negotiating with Parliament had brought matters to a crisis. Many now felt that the King was entirely untrustworthy, and that negotiation with him was futile - a reputation which was later to prove fatal.

While the war proper was creaking into action, an intense war of words between Parliament and Royalists manoeuvred

anxiously around the question of constitutional privileges. After the failure of the Charles' January coup, his propagandists reinvented him as a moderate, the defender of liberty and tradition, while Pym and Parliament made increasing inroads on the constitution. Petitions directed to both King and Parliament came from all parts of the Country, and attempts to muster forces under the command of each party continued amid widespread controversy.

By November, when *Some Considerations* was published, the civil war was underway - the Battle of Edgehill took place on October the twenty-third, and the Royalist forces turned towards London, an advance which culminated in the Battle of Brentford, during which Lilburne was captured. Parliamentary forces rebuffed the Royalist advance, and negotiations were undertaken at Oxford later in the year.

Some Considerations is thought to be Walwyn's second publication, coming after *The Humble Petition of the Brownists* (1641), an appeal for religious tolerance. It is entirely consistent with Walwyn's later views, and Haller's attribution seems unexceptionable. The burden of Walwyn's argument is that unity must be preserved against the Royalists, and that 'malignant' elements (including the clergy) are attempting to foment divisions between 'Protestants' (members of the established church) and 'Puritans' or separatists.

Walwyn's tone is impassioned, and his prose pours out as if under some emotional pressure. At this time Walwyn was involved in fund-raising for the Parliamentary war effort, a role which would necessarily bring him into contact with all parties opposed to the Royalists. Walwyn clearly objects to Laudian ceremonialism, but makes no comment on other parties within the national church, such as Presbyterians. As the church remained the central disseminator of ideological and political positions, control of the pulpit was an issue of the highest importance. Walwyn approves a policy of replacing 'malignant' ministers. The text thereby reveals

something of the hardening of attitudes which continued over the next several years, with a determined and widely-opposed campaign on behalf of Parliament (and later the Protectorate) to suppress non-Puritan religious practices¹³¹.

Walwyn's strictures on the clergy shade into the ferocious anti-clericalism of Overton (at this time producing single-sheet satires against prelacy and privilege, often in dialogue form, and in verse). Walwyn's intended audience is clearly different, as his long, univocal text indicates; it is directed towards church members in sympathy with parliamentary aims, rather than disaffected lower-class malcontents. Walwyn strongly opposes the Royal prerogative to call and dissolve Parliaments and to refuse assent to legislation¹³².

His opening remarks contain the seeds of future positions:

The end of Parliaments consultations, and actions, is to free the Kingdom (the care whereof is to them by the Kingdom committed) from all those heavy oppressions and tyrannies which for many yeares...have surrounded and overwhelmed the Kingdom.

(*Some Considerations*, in Taft, p.63)¹³³

The parenthesised passage is an early indication of later Leveller political theory, which insists on the sovereignty of the people. The term 'Kingdom', which clearly naturalises present political arrangements, would be replaced in Leveller discourse by the more collective 'Commonwealth'.

Walwyn criticises not only the clergy but lawyers, 'those devouring Locusts', and more generally 'evill men' who are willing to 'combine and associate together against all that

¹³¹ See John Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642-1649', (in) John Morrill, (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War: 1642-1649*, Macmillan, London, (1982), pp. 89-114.

¹³² For Joseph Frank, *The Levellers*, 'several pages of *Some Considerations* are concerned with a strongly partisan analysis of Caroline corruption.' (p.34).

¹³³ *The Writings of William Walwyn*, (eds) Jack R. McMichael & Barbara Taft, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, (1989). All further citations from Walwyn are from this edition.

oppose them'. Such unity should be emulated by Parliamentary supporters.

So how much more does it behove the honest men of this Kingdome, who are likely to taste equally the sweetes of liberty, or the bitter pills of slavery, how ever they may be perswaded otherwise for the present, to joyne together as one man, against all those whom they shall discerne either to oppose the Parliament, or endeavour to raise divisions and differences among themselves.

(S.C., in Taft, p.65)

Walwyn claims that the royalist forces, being weak, have to rely on propaganda and sowing divisions among their opponents.

For whatever their brags be, and how great soever their boasts...yet indeed their forces are but small, their provisions scanty, their meanes and mony only supplied by rapine, which cannot be long lasting.....Deceit and delusions are the principall weapons with which the evill Counsellors now fight

(S.C., in Taft, p.66)

This produces an interesting remark on the use of words, which has resonances throughout the history of rhetoric¹³⁴.

words are never defective to make evill seem good and good evill: what villany was there ever committed, or what injustice, but words and pretences might be found to justifie it:

(S.C., in Taft, p.67)

This might equally be said of either side in a conflict. Walwyn's complaint is against both misrepresentation and the 'policy' that informs it, and thus participates in a general distrust of 'Machiavellianism', something of which Walwyn himself was to be accused.

...if unjust things are offered us, as they are, without disguise and artificiall covering, they would appear so odious, as that each man would cry out upon them, and therefore it is a high point of policy to make the worst things show

¹³⁴ For example: Plato, *Protagoras*, (trans) C.C.W. Taylor, Clarendon Press, Oxford, Revised edition (1991).

fairest, speake best when they intend most
mischiefe.

(S.C., in Taft, p.67)

The insidious effect of propaganda is a continuing theme of Walwyn's later work, taking a markedly personal turn with attacks on William Prynne and Thomas Edwardes, and in his own defence in *The Fountain of Slaunder Discovered* and *Walwyns Just Defence* in 1649¹³⁵. Walwyn's assessment of the influence of propaganda is alarming, even alarmist.

Well their policies and delusions are most
numerous, and every day increasing, and
therefore it behoves every wise man to stand
upon his guard, to be wary and watchfull that he
be not apprehended by their subtilties: in
nothing there is required greater care, their
invasions being insensible, and having once
seised upon a man, he no longer dislikes, but
approves of them, they force a man to love what
erewhiles he hated, what he but now cryed downe,
to plead for, and not to observe, because his
intentions are honest, and he meanes no ill,
that he is even against his knowledge his
Countries enemy

(S.C., in Taft, p.67)

The depiction of those deluded by Royalist propaganda, 'apprehended by their subtilties', which although 'insensible', nevertheless seize and 'force', contradicts Walwyn's later position that free and rational discussion will clarify all difficulties; the arts of persuasion -of which Walwyn himself proves no mean exponent- can produce negative as well as positive results.

Walwyn's declaration that

Now, amongst many other wayes that they have
used to accomplish this end, there is not one
hath been more effectual then in raising, and
cherishing differences concerning formes and
circumstances about Religion, that so setting
them together by the eares about shadowes, they

¹³⁵ Walwyn's attack on Prynne is *A Helpe to the Right Understanding of a Discourse concerning Independency* (1645). His engagement with Thomas Edwardes runs to five publications; *A Whisper in the Eare* (1646), *A Word More to Mr. Thomas Edwardes* (1646), *An Antidote Against Master Edwardes* (1646), *A Prediction of Mr. Edwards His Conversion and Recantation* (1646), and *A Parable, or Consultation of Physitians upon Master Edwards* (1646). Furthermore, *The Bloody Project* (1648) is attributed on the title page to 'W.P. Gent' (Taft p.294) and 'is in direct contradiction of William Prynne's ideology.'

may in the meane time steale away your
substance:

(S.C., in Taft, p.68)

introduces a long passage on the need for tolerance in religious matters, and also bears what is for Walwyn a rare trace of the pervasive Puritan dichotomies in its use of the terms shadow and substance.

Walwyn's attitude to religious differences is clear in the contemptuous tone of what follows.

All our discourses are diverted now by the cunning practise of the Polititian from our forepast calamities, plots, and conspiracies of lewd men, from thinking what will be the best wayes to speed and advantage our undertakings for our liberty, to raylings against the Puritan, to crosse and oppose the Puritan, to provoke him by many insolencies, and affronts to disorders, and then to inveigh with all bitternesse against his disorders: if at such times as these, when so great a worke is in hand, as the freeing of us from slavery, we can be so drowzily sottish as to neglect that, for the satisfying our giddy and domineering humour, what can be said of us, but that our fancy is dearer to us then our liberty, that we care not what goes to racke, though it be our substantiall Religion, Lawes, and Liberties, so we doe but please our selves in crying downe our Brethren, because they are either more zealous, or else more scrupulous then our selves

(S.C., in Taft, p.68)

The terms 'drowzily sottish', 'giddy and domineering', 'fancy', and 'please ourselves' position those who complain of Puritans as selfish and foolish when weighed against 'substantiall Religion, Lawes, and Liberties', 'so great a worke' and 'slavery'. The Puritan is defended as having been subject to 'raylings', and concerns over sectarianism are portrayed as an intention to 'crosse and oppose', 'provoke ... by ... insolencies, and affronts to disorders' and to 'inveigh with all bitternesse against' the disorders thereby created. Walwyn's conspiracy theory was to deepen as the years passed, and divisions among Parliamentary supporters came into sharper focus.

Walwyn's advice comes in the form of a conundrum; '...if we be strong we should beare with them that are weake; if we are weake we should not judge them that are strong...' (p.69). To make the point clearly, Walwyn draws a comparison:

it is all one as if our enemy being in the field with full purpose and speed to destroy us, wee should turne aside to exclaime against a man that flung dirt upon us or laught at us: and wholly neglect altogether to defend ourselves: what a shame will it be unto us, when hereafter it is said that the English might have freed themselves from oppression and slavery, but that in the doing of it they neglected their common enemy, and fell at variance among themselves for trifles.

(S.C., in Taft, p.69)

Walwyn's warning was eventually to prove all too accurate: no lasting compromise could be reached between the elements of the Parliamentary alliance, and the projected political, religious and moral reformation dissipated in widespread indifference and resentment.

After a consideration of "the Apostle[']s" concern for his weak brother, Walwyn again employs the imagery of the radical wing of Parliamentarians, invoking the promised land of Canaan.

let every man thinke of the answering this question to himselfe: whether if lewd men doe get the better over the Parliament and honest men of the Kingdome, either Protestant or Puritan are likely to be any other but slaves: Certainly if any of them doe perswade themselves otherwise, they are like the stiffe-necked and unweildy Hebrewes, that wisht they were slaves in Egypt againe, where the much loved Flesh pots were, for that it was troublesome and dangerous passing through the Wildernesse into Canaan, a land of plenty and lasting liberty.

(S.C., in Taft, p.70)

While Walwyn in 1642 seems to use this image as a symbol for a just society, Abiezer Coppe, the Fifth Monarchists, Quakers and other Millenarians later took the image more literally. Charles' rule was a time of 'slavery', when 'domineering Bishops, corrupt and lawlesse Judges, grew rich and potent', 'offices...were bought and sold', and 'honours'

went to those 'easie to be corrupted, such as had stupid consciences'. The people were 'worried by Court Mastives, and eaten to the bare bones by griping judges and avaritious Lawyers' and 'murder..was not so punished as a word' (S.C., in Taft, p.70). The injustices of such a system are summed up thus:

wherein a poore man was hanged for stealing food for his necessitie, and a luxurious Courtier of whom the world was never like to have any other fruits but oathes and stabbes, could be pardoned after the killing the second or third man: wherein in a word, knaves were set upon honest mens shouldders, all loosenesse was countenanced, and vertue and pietie quite out of fashion.
(S.C., in Taft, p.70)

A speech worthy of an honourable man in a Jacobean Tragedy. After a passage defending the Puritan, 'Whatsoever faults the Puritan hath, this is not a time to cast them in his dish' (S.C., in Taft, p.71), Walwyn turns his critical attention next to the influence of the clergy. At this time the clergy were still those appointed by the Laudian church, a situation never to be fully resolved in the succeeding eighteen years. Although without official sanction, Bishops continued to ordain ministers; and although many individual ministers were to be excluded from their livings, many were not. Walwyn understands the importance of the pulpit in propaganda terms.

in all the time of this Kingdome slavery and wicked mens oppressions of us, who were greater promoters of both then the Clergy; what was the politique subject of their Sermons then, and discourses, but the advance of prerogative, and unlimited sway; the gayning of estimation to themselves not by their doctrines or lives, for what could be more corrupt and scandalous, but by subtill delusions, and delusive sophismes; the fitting of our minds for slavery, the abasing of our courages against injuries in Church or State; by preaching for obedience to all commands good or bad by which means ... were ... good men moap'd and stupified ... their very tongues tied up.

(S.C., in Taft, pp.72-73)

His anti-clericalism is sharply expressed, surprisingly so for one who remained an active member of his local Parish

church. The clergy are particularly suited for deception 'being the most subtil of the tribe by their abilities of speech, reverent estimation...of their functions, their sinceritie, they even delude them as they list...' (p.73). In short, they trade on the respect of the people in order to deceive them.

Walwyn is equally severe on talk of peace; 'the bondman is at peace; there is peace, there is peace in a dungeon' (p.75) 'what peace? What peace? So long as the insolencies and ...usurpations are so many? what peace?' (p.75) The insistent repetitions render the word meaningless, impossible.

Walwyn concludes by condemning the King's prerogative as unsafe for both King and people, since it divides one from the other¹³⁶. Walwyn, like Parliament itself, is not yet willing to condemn the King personally, employing the traditional complaint against corrupt and dishonest advisors. He notes that the London Militia is in 'safe and trusty hands' (p.76). The right to raise troops in the defence of London had been a point of hot dispute between King and Parliament, for obvious reasons, as it was to become one between Presbyterian and Independent factions in the future¹³⁷. Walwyn's final period recommends an impartial examination of the case 'by that uncorrupt rules of reason' (sic). The suggestion that any part of man's makeup is 'uncorrupt' contradicts the Calvinist insistence on the corrupting influence of the fall.

While *Some Considerations* is a spirited defence of unity among Parliamentary supporters, it reveals some of the latent tensions within the alliance, and condemns the malignant clergy as fomenters of dissension. Walwyn sides with Puritan separatists against Laudian ritualism, and with the population against Courtiers, Judges and Lawyers. For

¹³⁶ Joseph Frank, *The Levellers*, (p.33), 'Walwyn makes an unusually sharp distinction between those who are in the Royalist camp and those who oppose them.'

¹³⁷It has been argued by Robert Ashton that the King lost the Civil War because of his failure to secure London for himself. (Robert Ashton, *The English Civil War: Conservatism and Revolution 1603-1649*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, (1989), p.91)

Joseph Frank, 'several pages of *Some Considerations* are concerned with a strongly partisan analysis of Caroline corruption'¹³⁸. Frank is right in suggesting that the 'reasonable' Walwyn is highly partisan, and that his intervention tends to sharpen the divisions between the warring factions, and even within the Parliamentary alliance. Walwyn's absolute dismissal of 'peace' places him at the militant extreme of the political continuum. On two occasions Walwyn employs the discursive resources of Radical Protestantism in allusions to shadow and substance and to Canaan, but he avoids submergence in Biblical language, preferring to engage on a more secular level; I would say 'political', but for Walwyn's complete condemnation of 'polititians'. Walwyn's principles were to remain unchanged through seven or more years of intense activity, although the specifics of a constitutional programme for the foreseen reformation were to come into sharper focus as time passed.

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THE POWER OF LOVE

1643

The Power of Love was collected by Thomason on the nineteenth of September 1643¹³⁹. Civil War had been declared just over a year before, and the Parliamentary forces had made little progress. *Power of Love* takes no obvious account of the military situation; fundamentally a theological work, its political points focus on tensions within the Parliamentary alliance. Walwyn's distrust of incumbent ministers is already clear - he himself had been prominent in the replacement of his minister at St James Garlickhythe, before his move to Moorfields around 1643. The potential for instability in the Parliamentary alliance is shown by Pym's attacks on Henry Marten, whose republican speech of 16th

¹³⁸ Joseph Frank, *The Levellers*, p.34.

¹³⁹ It is to George Thomason, bookseller and book collector, that we owe the 'Thomason Collection', the most extensive single archive of Civil War political and religious tracts.

August led to his expulsion from the Commons and imprisonment in the Tower.

The Parliamentary Army, under the Earl of Essex, was disabled by unwillingness to attack the person of the King. A fiction that Parliament was fighting for the King but against his evil advisors was both a result of the Constitutional confusion, and thought necessary to preserve the unity and respectability of the Parliamentary faction¹⁴⁰. Despite Pym's ambiguous policy, more than 20 M.P.s defected to the King in 1643. Parliamentary armies suffered defeats in the north and south-west between May and July, and on the twenty-sixth of July Bristol fell to Royalist forces. By September, however, Parliament had regrouped; Gloucester was freed from seige, and Royalist forces at Newbury failed to block the army's access to London. Parliament also concluded its first alliance with the Scots, whose main concern was to gain a Presbyterian settlement for the English Church¹⁴¹. Walwyn could not have been in sympathy with this alliance, and *The Power of Love* represents a far more radical position than that of Parliament, despite its concentration on theology.

"To every Reader"

Walwyn's approach in this early work is unusual; he presents the text as a sermon, and deals with interruptions from the floor. Also unusual for Walwyn is the inclusion of an introductory epistle. Not only this, but he adopts the persona of a 'Famelist', or member of the 'Family of Love'. This shadowy sect has a history in both fiction and reality, featuring in plays by Middleton and Marston as well as making occasional appearances in the Ecclesiastical Courts from Elizabethan times¹⁴². As the Family of Love were highly

¹⁴⁰ R. Ashton, *The English Civil War*, p.183-185.

¹⁴¹ J. Morrill, (ed.) *Reactions to the English Civil War: 1642-1649*, ch.4.

¹⁴² John Middleton, *The Family of Love* (1602-8), (ed.) S. Shepherd, Nottingham, (1979); and *A Mad World, My Masters*, Act1, Sc.2, L.72. (p.121); John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, Act1, Sc.2, L.17-18, (p.42), both in *Four*

secretive and adhered in outward forms to the established Church, traces of them are based more on rumour than evidence; a situation only compounded by their belief that a forced oath had no weight with God, which enabled them to recant publicly of their heresy whilst inwardly adhering to it. Founded in the Low Countries in the previous century by Henrick Niklaes, they would seem to have been a strictly hierarchical organisation with strong internal discipline, very different from the free-spirited sexual communalism of their fictional representations. Familism claimed to reveal a secret doctrine concealed within Christianity. By the 1640's and 50's the term 'Family of Love' seems to have been used very loosely - George Fox allowed it in connection with the nascent Quaker movement in much the same way as Walwyn uses it here¹⁴³.

Walwyn opens, as he frequently does, as if he had already been talking for some time. His first word, 'For', would indicate a summation or conclusion of some comparison or line of argument, rather than the beginning of one. This is an arresting technique, and it is compounded in this case by the invention of an interpolation from a heckler:

For there is no respect of persons with God: and whosoever is possest with love, judgeth no longer as a man, but godlike, as a true Christian. What's here towards? (sayes one) sure one of the Family of love: very well! Pray stand still and consider: what family are you of I pray? Are you of Gods family? No doubt you are: why, God is love, and if you bee one of Gods children be not ashamed of your Father, nor his family

(*The Power of Love*, in Taft, p.79)

Walwyn's own definition of this family is predicated on the exercise of practical charity, and includes all Christians worthy of the name.

Jacobean City Comedies, ed. G. Salgado, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1975). See also: Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society 1550-1630*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1994); Alastair Hamilton, *The Family of Love*, James Clarke & Co., Cambridge, (1981). In 1580, Elizabeth had issued 'A Proclamation against the Sectaries of the Family of Love' (Proclamations 1580-10-03).

Judge then by this rule who are of Gods family; Looke about you and you will finde in these woefull dayes thousands of miserable, distressed, starved, imprisoned Christians: see how pale and wan they looke: how coldly, raggedly, and unwholesomely they are cloathed; live one weeke with them in their poore houses, lodge as they lodge, eate as they eate, and no oftener, and bee at the same passe to get that wretched food for a sickly wife, and hunger-starved children; (if you dare doe this for feare of death or diseases) then walke abroad, and observe the generall plenty of all necessaries, observe the gallant bravery of multitudes of men and women abounding in all things that can be imagined: observe likewise the innumerable numbers of those who have more then sufficeth. Neither will I limit you to observe the inconsiderate people of the world, but the whole body of religious people themselves, and in the very Churches and upon solemne dayes: view them well, and see whether they have not this world's goods; their silkes, their beavers, their rings, and other divises will testifie they have; I, and the wants and distresses of the poore will testifie that the love of God they have not.

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.80)

This long citation shows something of Walwyn's control of rhythm and argument. He balances a staccato exposition of poverty and imprisonment with a fulsome account of the 'general plenty' and 'gallant bravery' of society at large 'abounding in all things that can be imagined'. In each case the rhythm of the writing expresses something about the situation depicted. The phrase 'innumerable numbers' lends an air of paradox to proceedings. The reader is called upon to 'observe' three times, each at the head of a descriptive passage, and when the fourth 'observe' occurs the hearers are so in Walwyn's power that he directs their attention by extending limits they might think he has already imposed. The final section after the colon, 'view them well...' amounts to a rhetorical proof of the association of wealth and ungodliness which is further reinforced by the author's own testimony. This is powerfully 'levelling' material, which if translated into a plan of political action would result in the communalism of a Winstanley rather than the

¹⁴³ See H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends*, p.127.

constitutional democratisation later to be espoused by the Levellers as an organised group.

Perhaps aware of how far-reaching the precepts he espouses are, Walwyn counters a query from his imaginary audience, a technique familiar from the sermons of more orthodox preachers:

But (sayes another) what would you have? Would you have no distinction of men, nor no government?

(The Power, in Taft, p.80)

Walwyn dismisses the question of Government in a way which belies the detailed constitutional thought he was later to engage in.

And for that great mountaine (in your understanding) government, 'tis but a molehill if you would handle it familiarly, and bee bold with it: It is common agreement to be so governed: and by common agreement men chuse for governours, such as their vertue and wisdom make fit to governe: what a huge thing this matter of trust is made of? And what cause is there that men that are chosen should keepe at such distance, or those that have chosen them bee so sheepish in their presence?

(The Power, in Taft, p.80)

Already Walwyn's attitude to government is that it is a matter of consent, and the general trend of his remarks attacks deference and hierarchy, but there is no sign of Millenarian expectation. Clearly at this stage Walwyn considers the frame of government unimportant, what matters is the behaviour of individuals towards each other.

The text then erupts in a series of rhetorical questions which interpellate and interrogate the reader through the person of Walwyn's imaginary doubter. 'Why doe you start man?' is among the most direct, not to say brusque of them. They lead into a passage on Sectarians which perfectly accords with Walwyn's later views: one should not judge from hearsay, but engage believers of different persuasions in a dialogue aimed at establishing truth.

let every one freely speake his minde without molestation: and so there may be hope that truth may come to light, that otherwise may be obscured for particular ends: plaine truth will prove all, sufficient for vanquishing of the most artificiall, sophisticall errorr that ever there was in the world; give her but due and patient audience, and her perswasions are ten thousand times more powerfull to worke upon the most dull refractory minde, then all the adulterate allurements and deceivings of art.

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.81-82)

This position is similar to Milton's as expressed in *Areopagitica* (1644), but Walwyn's view of art is more typically 'puritan' than Milton's; art is the opposite of truth¹⁴⁴. His opposition of truth and art is not uncommon in seventeenth-century discourse, especially for those influenced by Puritan beliefs, where art and artifice were more or less interchangeable terms associated with deception¹⁴⁵. Walwyn concludes his introductory Epistle with this optimistic prediction, which takes the form of what is almost an equation, an unbroken chain of cause-and-effect which makes a virtual paradise on earth flow inevitably from the free exchange of opinions.

Let truth have her free and perfect working, and the issue will bee increase of beleevers: let faith have her perfect working, and the issue will bee increase of love: and let love have her perfect working, and the whole world will be so refined, that God will be all in all; for hee that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, in whom, ever fare you well, and bee cheerefull.

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.82)

Walwyn's incorporation of a sceptical voice within his text is perhaps partly Socratic in intention if not in influence, and certainly partly on dramatic grounds, reinforcing the sense of a spoken address that he seeks to create. It is a preacher's technique, found in the sermons of far more

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Frank, *The Levellers*, p.35. 'Despite Walwyn's abjuration of "art", this preface shows his flair for the quietly dramatic, his intimacy of tone, and his restrained forcefulness - qualities which make his appeal to love and reason a weapon for social reform rather than a series of pious platitudes.'

¹⁴⁵ Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* is an early attempt to counter such anti-art sentiment within Protestantism. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), *An Apology for Poetry: or The Defence of Poesy*, (ed.) Geoffrey Shepherd, Manchester University Press, Manchester, (1973).

orthodox figures such as John Donne. It shows Walwyn's awareness of the fact that there is a debate in progress in society at large, and that his views are not likely to go widely unopposed. However, it serves the purpose of countering what Walwyn sees as likely objections to his message, thus encouraging the reader who might entertain such doubts to continue reading.

Walwyn presents the sceptic as interrupting the flow of his sermon in oral form, the speech of the other denoted by parenthesised notes. The other is several (says one) (says another) but there is little differentiation in the voices, either between Walwyn and the others or within the others as a group. In Bakhtinian terms this introduction of other voices is a form of 'dialogism' which he describes as 'voice interference'. Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian critic and linguistic theorist has several insights which may usefully be applied to these writings, which repeatedly engage the assistance of or challenge the arguments of other voices and other texts within their compass.

Walwyn's use of dialogue, either here in *The Power of Love*, or later, in *A Parable*, expanded into closet drama, does not move beyond the 'didactic' in Bakhtinian terms; voices from beyond the author's world-view are contained within his own discourse, rather than competing with equal weight. However, in a broader view, Walwyn is committed to dialogue as a method for discovering truth, and he is engaged in a pamphlet literature which is itself a debate among different religious and political positions. Walwyn's writing is monological in that it is not a search for a new truth through discussion, but the expression of a previously known, revealed truth; objections are entertained only for the purpose of dismissing them in obedience to this truth. Indeed, one might argue that despite Walwyn's commitment to debate as a technique, even a virtue, his 'word' is not 'anacretically' employed to elicit the 'word' of another, but rather to silence that word and subject it to the

truth¹⁴⁶. Walwyn's toleration, in other words, does not extend to the oppressor, and this is what makes his position that of a revolutionary, an extremist; in seventeenth-century terms perhaps 'atheisticall', a 'leveller'. Walwyn could then be criticised as the late twentieth-century liberal middle-class has been criticised, for wishing to impose a culture of consent, to enforce toleration - a paradox of sorts. Cromwell, when faced with such a paradox was to extend toleration only to those he felt were in sympathy with his own beliefs¹⁴⁷.

The Power of Love

The Power of Love proper begins with a sweeping commonsense statement calculated to bring the reader into sympathy with Walwyn's view. The tone is strong and confident, it is a work which springs from the inner certainty central to revealed religion. It is doubly interesting then, that Walwyn takes the burden of his argument in the early passages from Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals', an essay which is itself an extended meditation on the superiority of the state of nature to the civilised and sophisticated¹⁴⁸. Walwyn clearly approves the state of nature as being closer to God's design than are man's innovations. This is far from the vision of nature as the war of all against all which Hobbes was to advance in *Leviathan*.

It is evident (though it be little regarded or considered, the more is the pity) that in naturall things all things whatsoever that are necessary for the use of mankinde, the use of them is to be understood easily with out study or difficulty: every Capacity is capable thereof; and not only so, but they are all likewise ready at hand, or easily to be had: a blessing that God hath afforded to every man, insomuch, that there is no part of the habitable world, but yeeldes sufficient of usefull things

¹⁴⁶ I deploy here the Bakhtinian terminology relayed by Caryl Emerson in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

¹⁴⁷ This may be controversial in view of Cromwell's opposition to the Blasphemy Ordinance, (eventually passed into law in May 1648), but it seems to me to be his actual position.

¹⁴⁸ Montaigne, *Essays*, (tr.) J. Florio, (London, 1603).

for a comfortable and pleasant sustentation of the inhabitants; as experience testifieth in all places;

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.82)

'Sustentation' is a splendid word, although the argument is rather circular: a definition of 'habitable' would be that it yielded 'sufficient of usefull things'. Walwyn speaks with a confidence based purely on hearsay, and far from unchallenged in the period; not only Hobbes, but the entire Calvinist tradition opposes any such interpretation of fallen nature. Just below the surface of Walwyn's account of nature overtaken by sophistication is a radical reinterpretation of the Fall. Man, in his innocent, natural state

desiring only what was necessary, and so being exempt from all labour, and care of obtaining things superfluous, he passed his dayes with abundance of delight and contentment:

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.82)

The next passage, showing man in the fallen state, in pursuit of the fruit(s) of the tree of knowledge, follows directly.

Until he sought out to himselfe many inventions: inventions of superfluous and artificiall things, which have beene multiplied with the ages of the world, every age still producing new: so now in these later times we see nothing but mens inventions in esteeme, and the newer the more precious; if I should instance in particulars, I should or might be endlesse

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.82-83)

Walwyn goes on to condemn the luxurious tastes of contemporary society in a way which questions his own membership of the Merchant Adventurers, and his espousal of tree trade.

this fruitfull nation sufficeth not to furnish scarce the meanest meale you make, but something must be had to please the luxurious palate from forraine and farre countryes: and ever the farther the better, and the dearer the more acceptable

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.83)

Worse still are 'entertainments and set meetings', 'where all the senses must be pleased to the height of all possible concept' (p.83). Walwyn cannot even enumerate the 'manifold vexations, perplexities, distractions, cares, and inconveniences that accrew unto you by these your vaine and ridiculous follies.' (p.83) Besides which, complaining is hopeless, since cultural conditioning has normalised such behaviour:

for there is no hope that I should prevaile for a reformation of these things, when your daily experience scourges you continually thereunto, in one kind or another, and all in vaine; yet I shall take leave to tell you that in these things, you walke not as becommeth the gospell of Christ, but are carnall and walke as men, as vaine, fantasticall, inconsiderate men; such as the very heathen and meere naturall men would be ashamed of:

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.83)

True Christians simply could not behave in this way.

Doe you thinke it is sufficient that you are not drunkards, nor adulterous, nor usurers, nor contentious persons, nor covetous? Beloved, if you will truly deserve the name of Christians, it is not sufficient: but you are to abandon all superfluities...and to apply yourselves freely to the continual contemplation of the infinite love of God

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.84)

Walwyn draws a connection between 'naturall' and 'divine' which places them in alignment: as in the natural, so in the divine. Such an equivalence would be denied by the Quakers but accepted by Gerrard Winstanley, although in a different form¹⁴⁹. The Quakers were severe in their condemnation of fallen nature, whereas Winstanley sought to enact a physical redemption on it. Our contemporary distinction between the social and the natural does not seem to exist for these thinkers; the social arena is the unmarked site of discourse

¹⁴⁹ 'Winstanley, like the Ranters, believed that God was in all things, that creation was the clothing of God.' C. Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', (in) *The Collected Essays, Volume Two, Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England*, The Harvester Press, Brighton, (1986), p.199. This is a debatable point; Coppe is fiercely transcendental, and Winstanley not as 'materialist' as sometimes suggested. Winstanley does

and of struggle. Categories have shifted, Walwyn's 'naturall' does not coincide with our range of uses for the term, it denotes instead the social arena of pre-Christian (and thus pre-Civilised) peoples.

Walwyn makes repeated reference to 'reading' Biblical texts to his audience, reinforcing his position as a preacher delivering a public address. Although framed as a sermon in this way, Walwyn's position on the stock-in-trade of preachers, Biblical exegesis, is simple and plainly stated. It too springs from the comparison of natural and divine.

God hath dealt abundantly well with us; there being nothing that is necessary either for the enlightening of our understandings, or for the peace of our mindes, but what hee hath plainly declared and manifestly set forth in his Word: so plainely, that the meanest capacity is fully capable of a right understanding thereof.....wee are as evill to our selves in all things as we can be possible: and that not onely in naturall things, but likewise in spirituall and divine things too, for therein also we have our inventions;

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.84)

The underlying structural importance of Walwyn's use of the natural and the spiritual as equivalents rather than opposites is becoming plain. He condemns what he sees as the pride of the learned who seek difficulties to expound, generating unnecessary complexity. Walwyn presents a parody of their position.

the plaine and evident places of Scripture and manifestly declaring our peace and reconciliation with God, is become nauseous to us: they make salvation too easie to be understood, and tender it upon too easie termes, and too generall: this Manna that comes to us without our labour, industry, study, and watching, is too fulsome, something that hath bones in it must bee found out, and will become more acceptable: every child or babe in Christs Schoole can understand these: We are full growne men in Christ, wee have spent our time in long and painefull studies, and have full knowledge in all Arts and sciences: there is no place of Scripture too hard for us: shew us the mysteries

associate God and Reason, in common with Overton (*Mans Mortalitie*) and John Warr (*Administrations, Civil and Spiritual*).

we cannot reveale: the Parables that wee cannot
clearely open: the Propheties that wee cannot
interpret: a word or Syllable that we cannot
fitly apply, or the most palpable seeming
contradiction that we cannot reconcile;
(*The Power*, in Taft, p.84)

Such pride, generating 'invention', serves to obscure and not to reveal. Walwyn's 'invention' is an equivalent to Winstanley's and Fox's 'imaginings', a departure from the truth through human self-importance or unrestrained enthusiasm.

The passages cited above may show some confused typography; a word may be missing after 'Scripture' at the beginning of the last section, the phrase 'as we can be possible' in the section above that is less grammatically pure than one expects from Walwyn. Walwyn goes on to suggest that there may be those bold academicians who weep like Alexander for new texts to conquer, or more plausibly, and alarmingly

they are much troubled that the most necessary truths are so easie to be understood: for that when they treat upon some very plaine place of Scripture, even so plaine as this which I have read unto you, yet in handling thereof they make it difficult, and darken the clear meaning thereof with their forced and artificiall glosses:

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.85)

Walwyn's remedy is economical, again using the equivalence of natural and spiritual as its basis. What is necessary is easily available, we should eschew the rest. Walwyn returns to his attack on decadence in a passage studded with terms which mark it as sermonising.

Sure I am, and I must have leave to tell you, that there is utterly a fault amongst you, nay those expressions are too soft, you have almost nothing but faults amongst you, and you will not consider, which you must doe, and seriously too, or you will never reduce your selves into such a condition, as will be really sutable to the blessed name of Christians. Beloved I have seriously considered it, and it is not your case alone, but it is the universall disease. I know not any that is not infected therewith, nor to whom it may not be said, Physitian heale they selfe; the milke we have suckt, and the common

ayre hath beene totally corrupted: our first instructions, and all after discourses have beene indulgent flatterers to our darling superfluities: and therefore he that undertakes the cure, must bee sure to bee provided of a fit and powerfull medicine, and to be diligent and faithfull in his undertaking;

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.85)

The use of medical metaphors is interesting in the light of Walwyn's later involvement in the production of medicines. He then declares 'I shall lay downe ...some infallible principles...' the first of which is that God hates sin. Like Abiezer Coppe in *Coppe's Return to the Ways of Truth*, Walwyn directs his accusations of sinfulness mostly at the Godly, since it is they who lay stress on God's Law, rather than his Grace.

can you say you have noe sinne? If you should, the word of God would contradict you, which testifieth that he that saith he hath no sinne is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and if sinne be in every one, necessarily it followes where sinne is, there is god's hatred; nor doeth it in any whit excuse or exempt those from the hatred of God, that can say their sinnes are fewe in number, and of very meane condition compared to others: whosoever you are that are thus indulgent to your selves, you doe but deceive your selves, for God's hatred, his wrath and anger, is so exact against all and every sinne, and so odious it is in his sight, that he denounceth, saying, Cursed is every one that continueth not to doe all that is written in the booke of the law: So as every mouth must be stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God; and though the sense and deepe apprehension of this woefull condition, doe worke in you the deepest of sorrow, though you should spend your dayes in weeping, and your nights in woefull lamentation, though you should repent your selves in dust and ashes, and cover your selves with sackcloathes: though you should fast your selves into paleness, and hang downe your heads alwayes: though you should give all your goods to the poor; nay, though you should offer up the fruit of your bodies, for the sin of your soules; all this and more could be no satisfaction for the least sinne, nor any peace to your mindes: but you must of force cry out at last, as Saint Paul did, (stating the sad condition of those under the law) *Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!*

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.86-87)

A long balancing of clause structures builds tension to an explosive exclamation rooting Puritan despair in Biblical precedent. The first half of the passage, up to "and all the world stand guilty before God" lays out the case against the reader as sinner under the Law with forensic care. "Gods hatred" is "exact against all and every sinne", and the sinner "Cursed". There is no escape from the inching of this baleful logic. The second half is structured through repetition of "though", which recurs six times, at the head of each of the possible attempts at expiation or expressions of repentance which Walwyn enumerates. The central section of these repetitions is organised in linked pairs (dayes/nights, repent your selves/cover your selves). The last pair is interrupted ("nay, though"), which serves to break and accelerate the tolling rhythm in preparation for the classic, seminal cry of despair in the face of sinfulness. Man under the Law is 'in the hatred of God, a vessell of wrath' 'his sad heart turnes all into death.....terroures, and feares, and eternal torments are ever in his thoughts:' (p.87)

Man is not under the Law, however, he is under Grace:

I am not a preacher of the law, but of the
gospell; nor are you under the law, but under
grace: the law was given by Moses, whose
minister I am not: but grace and truth came by
Jesus Christ, whose minister I am: whose
exceeding love, hath appeared:
(*The Power*, in Taft, p.87-88)

and further:

for if righteousnesse come by the law, then
Christ died in vaine;
(*The Power*, in Taft, p.88)

Like Coppe, Walwyn makes use of the term 'reconciled'. Coppe stresses in *A Fiery Flying Roll* that God has reconciled all things to himself - a strange and ambiguous statement. Walwyn's use of the term suggests that Christ has reconciled man and God: mankind is redeemed from sin through and into love and grace. He then 'reads' his audience passages from Romans 5, most crucially perhaps Paul's assertion in verse

fifteen that 'even so by the righteousnesse of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life:' (p.89)

Walwyn rejects the Law, an antinomian position much in sympathy with Coppe's ecstatic writings from *Some Sweet Sips*, to *A Fiery Flying Roll*, but one with explicit warrant from Scripture. Walwyn's assurance is complete:

(Beloved) God by the power of his Word hath begotten so full assurance of these things in me, as that thereby he hath made me an able Minister of the New Testament: not of the Letter, (or the Law) but of the Spirit: for the Letter killeth, but the Spirit (that is the Gospel) giveth life.
(*The Power*, in Taft, p.90)

Walwyn introduces a second of the pervasive dichotomies of radical Protestant discourse, the distinction between Spirit and Letter, again originating with Paul, and derived from the Pauline interpretation of the teachings and significance of Christ, which in Paul's time were not yet fixed into 'Scriptures'. Later radicals such as Coppe and Winstanley can regard the Word as internal and revelatory, not Scriptural at all. Walwyn himself accepts both revelation and Scripture as manifestations of the Word or Spirit of God in *A Still and Soft Voice* (1647).

Walwyn further asserts Christ's 'reconciliation' "...that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himselfe", (2 Corinthians 5.19) - which would seem to be the text from which Coppe preaches in *A Fiery Flying Roll* (1649) - "...we are reconciled to God by the death of his Sonne: that we are justified freely by his grace:". As to who 'we' are, Walwyn's position on redemption seems all inclusive, Pelagian:

This worke of your redemption and reconciliation with God was perfected when Christ died: and nothing shall be able to separate you from his love then purchased: neither infidelity, nor impenitencie, nor unthankfulnesse, nor sinne, nor any thing whatsoever can make void his purchase

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.90-91)

Despite the evidence of the New Testament, people have remained ignorant of this, the most significant of truths. They live in fear of God.

Our feare distracts our judgements, that wee consider not what the scripture sets forth unto us: if we did, wee should see aparently that it sets forth salvation wrought and perfected forever: to whom doth it manifest the same? to sinners, to the ungodly, to all the world: a worke perfected, depending on no condition, no performance at all

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.91)

The Pelagian heresy, that all are redeemed by Christ's expiation of sin, could hardly be more firmly stated. Free Grace is an inherently libertarian doctrine, and Walwyn extends it liberally to all, even to those who do not believe.

For though your present comfort depends on your beleeving this word, yet the worke of Christ depends not on your beleeving: and though you should not beleeve, yet hee is faithfull and cannot deny himselfe to be your redeemer, your peace-maker, your Saviour. Men are not pleased except salvation be proved to be very difficult to bee obtained, it must still depend either on our beleeving, or doing, or repenting, or self-deniall, or Sabbath-keeping, or something or other, or else man is not pleased: too easie? good God! that free love should be suspected;

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.91)

Walwyn presents the fears and suspicions, even the religious practices of those who do not embrace his conception of Free Grace as ingratitude to God. He does not see why free grace freely bestowed on all should lead to indulgence in sinfulness, rather the gratitude of each to God should compel him to act in accordance with Christian principles.

I cannot suspect [doubt] the most vitious man in the world, but that hearing these things his heart will make strict enquiry, what he shall render unto the Lord for all his benefits? and his heart once moving in thoughts of thankfulness will instantly be inflamed with love, which in an instant refines the whole man. God is love, and love makes man God-like.

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.92)

This remarkable optimism over the inherent goodness of the human spirit brings Walwyn close to the ecstatic pronouncements of Coppe, or the human perfectibility proposed by Nayler. Such optimism must have been sorely tested during the next six years of active political life. Walwyn then predicts the result of the proper understanding of this doctrine on his hearers, saying that they will reform their decadent behaviour and "walk as becommeth the Gospel of Christ" (p.93). In Walwyn's view this will mean no longer honouring hierarchy or wealth, but virtue, it will mean being willing to "hazzard your lives for God, in defence of his truth from error; in defence of your brother from oppression or tyranny:" (p.93). Love is militant. Walwyn goes further, aiming an attack on those who use Christian doctrine as a prop for unjust secular power. In this he certainly has in view the attitudes of the Caroline/Laudian Church, and probably also the Calvinist doctrine of obedience to the magistrate adopted by much of Presbyterianism.

The politicians of this world would have religious men to be fooles, not to resist, no by no meanes, lest you receive damnation: urging Gods holy Word, whilst they proceed in their damnable courses; but (beloved) they will finde that true Christians are of all men the most valiant defenders of the just liberties of their Countrey..

(*The Power*, in Taft, p.94)

Walwyn makes a typical call for unity, decrying those who invent "a name of reproach for every particular difference in judgement". Love is militant: "resolved malice love itself will punish"(p.94). This section leads into a renewed attack on the learned which makes clear and explicit links between knowledge and power in a seventeenth-century context.

And as for learning, as learning goes nowadaies, what any judicious man make of it, but as an Art to deceive and abuse the understandings of men, and to mislead them to their ruine? If it be not so, whence comes it that the Universities, and University men throughout the Kingdome in great numbers are opposers of the welfare of the Common-wealth, and are pleaders for absurdities

in government, arguers for tyranny, and corrupt
the judgements of their neighbours?
(*The Power*, in Taft, p.95)

This attack on "University men" as a class or group intent on preserving their own interests is a characteristic theme of later radicals, sharpened as it is by an anti-clerical edge. Universities produced not only clerics but lawyers too, and the education was chiefly in rhetoric and languages. This linguistic education gave them the exclusive right to work in the Church and the Law - the Law was written in Norman French, a particularly sore point with the Levellers, a part of the 'Norman Yoke' which was supposed to have suppressed Anglo-Saxon liberties¹⁵⁰. Walwyn objects to anyone who might seek to interpose themselves between the Scriptures and the common reader. Since the Bible has been translated, why should anyone need experts to interpret it?

saies some politick learned man, a man that doth not understand the Originall language, cannot so perfectly give the sense of the Scripture, as he that doth: or as one that makes it his study for ten or twenty yeares together, and hath no other employment: every man being best skilled in his owne profession wherein he hath been bred and accustomed. I did well to say some politicke learned man might thus object: for indeed what is here but policie? for if it be as such men would imply, I pray what are you the better for having the Scripture in your owne language: when it was lock'd up in the Latine tongue by the policie of Rome, you might have had a learned Fryar for your money at any time to have interpreted the same: and though now you have it in your owne language, you are taught not to trust your owne understanding, (have a care of your purses) you must have an University man to interpret the English, or you are in as bad a case as before but not in worse; for, for your money you may have plenty at your service, & to interpret as best shall please your fancie.
(*The Power*, in Taft, p.95-96)

In the case of the University-educated elite 'ambition, covetousnesse, disdain, pride and luxury are the things

¹⁵⁰ See M.R. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, p.130; C. Hill, *A Nation of Change and Novelty*, p.64. R. Ashton, *The English Civil War*, pp.18-20, 351-352. Also Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language*, Oxford University Press, London, (1953).

aimed at: and if it be not so, by the fruits you shall certainly know.' (p.96).

Walwyn concludes by assuring his audience of the rectitude of 'those that are accused' over Government, revealing his concern with political developments beneath the theological, warning against those who foment divisions within the Parliamentary alliance, ('Wolves in Sheepes cloathing'), and advising his readers to be 'wise as Serpents' and 'innocent as Doves'. His final statement is '*That the love of God bringing salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching you to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:*' (p.96)

The Power of Love is a striking exposition of the theology of Free Grace which underpins much radical thought in the era, and which had inspired the Anabaptists of Germany with similar political positions¹⁵¹. Free Grace is inherently 'levelling', with consequences that can extend as far as the communalism of Winstanley and the German Anabaptists, the human perfectibility of Coppe and Nayler, or the paradoxically revolutionary quietism of Quakers in general. It is in direct conflict with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which divides the population into elect and reprobate, offering instead a universal redemption with far-reaching social consequences. In all this there is no need for Walwyn to proclaim any new dispensation - the Seventeenth Century already lived under the Gospel, not the Law. For Walwyn all that is necessary is adherence to the fundamental principles expressed in the New Testament.

Walwyn shows himself to have an astute political/cultural awareness in his choice of different voices and strategies for different arguments and audiences. While *Some*

¹⁵¹ See E. Belfort Bax, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*, Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., (1903), reprinted Augustus M. Kelly, New York, (1970), p.18. Also, Thomas Muntzer 'Well-Warranted Speech in My Own Defense', (in) *German Humanism and Reformation*, (ed.) Reinhard P. Becker, Continuum, New York, (1982), pp.274-290; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, London, (1970), pp.172-174; Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present: the 4,000-year Quest for God*, Mandarin, London, (1994), pp.365-370.

Considerations, dealing with practical concerns, is in down-to-earth 'plain style', *The Power of Love* adopts a more elevated tone, is framed as a sermon, and argues a radical theology. Each of these different fields and audiences is catered for, indicating an aesthetic of appropriacy, or decorum. The use of such a strategic approach is ironic in the light of Walwyn's warnings about propaganda and 'the cunning practise of polititians'.

In both *The Power of Love* and *A Still and Soft Voice* Walwyn draws a parallel between the natural and the divine in which the natural is analogous to its spiritual counterpart, and principles derived from earthly experience can be applied to the religious. This would be rejected by Calvinists (and later Quakers) in view of their attitude to the fallen world. Walwyn's position is closer to that of Winstanley or Coppe.

As Walwyn's rational tone is so unusual in its historical context, it may be considered part of his strategy; both form and content are equally an assault on the closed mind of the 'superstitious'. My question in this connection would be 'to whom is this tone intended to appeal?'. Walwyn's lucid, open style is sharply distinct from the 'bumbast inkhorn tearmes, savouring so much of a meer pedanticke' which he attributes to William Prynne¹⁵². Walwyn ridicules Prynne's latinate pomposities. Prynne, like Edwardes later, had committed the grave transgression of slandering people for their religious beliefs. Walwyn believes Parliament will be unmoved by Prynne's 'fierce exclamations, or incomparable flatteries' (*A Helpe*, in Taft, p.139), and thereby elevates the greater reasonableness of his own tone. He criticises classical learning insofar as it 'puffeth up, and makes men scornfull pedants, despisers of unlearned and illiterate men...' (*Walwyn's Just Defence* (1649), in Taft, p.397). This seems sufficient to stress Walwyn's commitment to a natural English prose, if not exactly in the 'plain style' of Bunyan, then certainly smooth, measured and lucid, free of

¹⁵² *A Helpe to the Right Understanding*, (1644/1645) in Taft, p.137.

'bumbast', pedantry, and oratorical flourish. Walwyn is just as combative as his opponents, however: in the course of his writing he attacks the Clergy, educated and monied elites, superstition, Royalists, 'polititians', the second Civil War, William Prynne, Thomas Edwardes and the Independent Churches.

In 'Atheism and Radical Speculation', Nigel Smith accuses 'progressive' historians of 'bad faith' in both congratulating their subjects on near-secularism and admiring their stoicism under persecution¹⁵³. This seems to me not so much 'bad faith' as an excess of good will. That historians have repeatedly mined the seams of radical protestantism for nuggets of 'progressive' thought is undeniable, often leaving themselves open to charges of partiality, teleological thinking and selectivity. In the case of William Walwyn it seems clear to me that he uses the 'scepticism' of Montaigne and Charron to destabilise the arguments of those he calls 'morall' or 'superstitious' Christians.

For Smith, Walwyn's style 'represents a synthesis of scepticism and humanism that is designed to present a persona of considered good sense and goodwill' (p.153), but as Walwyn's goodwill (certainly), and good sense (possibly) were in question among contemporaries and opponents such as Bastwick, Prynne, Goodwin and Edwardes this may partly be an effect of the greater acceptance of rationalist discourse in our own period. Walwyn's equation of 'naturall' and 'divine', 'naturall' and 'innocent', and 'naturall' and 'rational' were highly controversial in his own time. The argument of *The Power of Love* (1643), which forges these connections, seems to place the Fall not in the Garden but in the world, in a transition from primitive to civilised, in the pursuit of 'inventions', associated with the fruits of the tree of knowledge¹⁵⁴. Walwyn is a rare, even unique,

¹⁵³ Nigel Smith, 'The Charge of Atheism and the Language of Radical Speculation, 1640-1660', (in) *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, (eds) Michael Hunter and David Wootton, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1992), p.133.

¹⁵⁴ The argument is in large part derived from Montaigne's *Of Cannibals*.

example of rationalist/humanist reasoning allied to mystical, revealed religion.

England's Lamentable Slaverie

Late in 1645, Walwyn wrote an open letter in support of the imprisoned John Lilburne. This was published anonymously as *Englands Lamentable Slaverie*, bracketed by messages from the printer (possibly Richard Overton)¹⁵⁵. *Englands Lamentable Slaverie* takes natural rights arguments to the point where they must be considered transcendent moral truths, rather than historically contingent. In this connection it decries Magna Carta, a document nearly sacred to Lilburne, calling it 'that messe of pottage'. In the course of a fairly negative review of the history of parliaments Walwyn concludes that none is above the law. *Englands Lamentable Slaverie* also attacks William Prynne, without naming him, and praises Lilburne as a defender of freedom.

Englands Lamentable Slaverie is highly suggestive of the origins of the Leveller party, uniting Walwyn and Overton in support of Lilburne. Lilburne's personal example and gift for self-publicity, allied with Walwyn's organisational skills and his subtle pen were to arouse and sustain over the next few years a popular movement in support of political and religious liberalisation.

A further crucial moment is addressed by Walwyn's *A Demurre to the Bill for Preventing the Growth and Spreading of Heresie* (1646)¹⁵⁶. This is a passionate and extensively detailed defence of diversity in religious opinion against the Presbyterian attack of the Blasphemy Ordinance proposed by the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

¹⁵⁵ *Englands Lamentable Slaverie*, (1645), in Taft, pp.143-153.

¹⁵⁶ *A Demurre to the Bill for Preventing the Growth and Spreading of Heresie*, (1646), in Taft, pp.236-244.

A STILL AND SOFT VOICE FROM THE SCRIPTURES

A Still and Soft Voice would seem to have been written around March/April of 1647, since *Walwyns Just Defence* states that it post-dates the 'Large Petition' of March¹⁵⁷. It may be an appeal from Walwyn for the continued support of the Independent Churches in the Leveller programme. Although its specific focus is on 'slander' against him personally, this was probably directed against wider Leveller influence.

From his account in *Walwyns Just Defence*, he had been in frequent contact with Cromwell over the preceding weeks, whilst the Presbyterian Parliamentary majority sought a settlement with the King ignoring the concerns of the Army over freedom of conscience, arrears of pay, criminal indemnity and the constitution. Cromwell adhered to Parliament (of which he was a leading Independent member) as the constitutional authority. Parliament also held the King. Within a few weeks all this was to change, and power to swing decisively to the Army. This is a crucial juncture in the shift from Civil War to revolutionary politics.

I suggest Walwyn encouraged Cromwell to rejoin the Army (Cromwell held no command at this point) and negotiate directly with the King in pursuit of a bloodless settlement more in line with Leveller proposals. The political position was delicate, with Parliament having adopted an anti-tolerantist Presbyterian National Church, and Leveller-style agitation increasing in the Army and continuing in London and the counties¹⁵⁸. Cromwell was soon to assume control of the army, and to succeed in preserving the interests of his own social and religious group against the

¹⁵⁷ *Walwyns Just Defence*, (1649), in Taft, pp.383-432.

¹⁵⁸ Although Parliament adopted Presbyterian church government in March 1646, Scots Presbyterians and their English allies in the Westminster Assembly of Divines (convened to decide a religious settlement in July 1643) considered it insufficiently strict on excommunication, and protested in April. R. Ashton, *The English Civil War*, pp.243-245.

competing claims of Presbytery, Royalty, the Scots, and the social radicals.

Whilst the Levellers might have had greater political success if Cromwell had not been in place to contain and later crush organised radicalism in the Army, Walwyn's concern was to avoid further bloodshed whilst restricting the ability of Parliament to push through anti-tolerant measures. The Presbyterian majority in the Commons, seeing the victorious Army as a hotbed of religious dissidence, a continuing and unnecessary expense, and a threat to their favoured settlement, sought to disband most and send the remainder to suppress the Catholic Irish. The terms offered to the Army in March, (six weeks arrears of pay and no indemnity for acts committed in wartime) were unacceptable. Parliament took a contemptuous attitude to the Army's views on the religious and political settlement resulting from their victory. The Parliamentary majority saw the New Model Army as merely a tool in their contest with the King over the rightful form of Government. That the Army should now seek influence over the settlement was like servants instructing their masters. For Holles, and no doubt for others of his party, this distinction truly was one of class; his memoirs condemn the New Model Army not only for its heterodoxy but for its social makeup ('a notable dunghill')¹⁵⁹. Many lower-ranking officers were from the lower orders. A patrician disdain for the rabble governs Parliament's attitude to the Army; this enraged the soldiers and encouraged Army resistance.

The Army had come to feel itself a force for good, and had developed solidarity and loyalty through several arduous years and eventual victory. They now felt Parliament wished to disband them and punish them individually for their beliefs and actions without either paying them in full for their service or offering them any voice in the fruits of their victory. The tone of the Leveller-style pamphlets and petitions of the Army is reminiscent of the attitudes of

¹⁵⁹ *Memoirs of Denzil Lord Holles*, (London, 1699), p.30.

servicemen returning from the Second World War: a feeling that as they had been fighting for liberty and justice they could expect some for themselves. As Colonel Rainborough put it on October twenty-ninth, 1647, in the Putney debates: 'I think that 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;'¹⁶⁰

The Leveller's 'Large Petition', which was condemned as 'scandellous, and seditious'¹⁶¹, and eventually burnt by the hangman, had been seized in March, whilst signatures were still being collected. An Army Petition was also condemned on March thirtieth. A rising tide of egalitarian or democratising sentiment seemed to threaten social revolution, the 'meer utopian anarchie' which Parliament so dreaded. Both Cromwell and the Presbyterians sought to avoid an alliance between Leveller supporters in London and the rank-and-file of the New Model Army. Cromwell could succeed only if he took charge of the Army in its mounting confrontation with Parliament.

It was not until June that Cromwell made such a commitment, but in June events moved with a bewildering swiftness, and the result was not the bloodless settlement in favour of democratisation and toleration which Walwyn foresaw, but a further round of violence, and eventual military control.

Why did Walwyn at this pivotal moment choose to address the root of his Christian faith rather than some more public political position? He had been fighting a rearguard action against Presbyterian intolerance in the forms of the Westminster Assembly, William Prynne and Thomas Edwardes for some time¹⁶². Presbyterian fear of Leveller insurrection was clear in a petition from the citizens of London to

¹⁶⁰ Quoted from the Clarke Papers by A.S.P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, p.53.

¹⁶¹ *Gold Tried in the Fire* in Taft, p.277.

¹⁶² A series of five rebukes to Edwardes was published in 1645-1646, and all of Walwyn's pamphlets contain a plea for religious liberty.

Parliament, which was supported by the Common Council on December nineteenth 1646, condemning 'firebrands' and speaking uneasily of the New Model Army¹⁶³. At the same time, Independents who had previously been supportive of Leveller campaigns may have come to feel they were being taken further than they wished to go. Cromwell was no democrat, and most Independent churches were far from tolerant of all shades of belief; their very withdrawal from the National Church would seem to indicate that, and the histories of Independent churches are composed of disputes over theology and discipline, excommunications and power-struggles. In offering an account of his own faith, Walwyn seeks to disarm his accusers, but his simultaneous attack on formal believers can hardly have smoothed many ruffled feathers.

In her headnote to *A Still and Soft Voice* Barbara Taft maintains that 'the argument is rational' (p.263), but I am not so sure. The tone is rational, and the conversational pitch, particularly at the opening, is certainly itself 'still and soft', but the basis of Walwyn's belief is not rational, it is an emotional response which produces an inner conviction, or vice-versa. Walwyn's technique of rational enquiry, the element of his thinking most congenial to current taste, is therefore only intended as a means of disrupting and confounding the specious arguments from precedent, reason and scripture which were the stock-in-trade of seventeenth-century theological discussion. Walwyn's belief is neither rational nor theoretical, but experiential and empirical. It is not accessible to rational enquiry, it is revealed, not taught. He has this in common with the 'experimental' believers of Radical Protestantism.

Walwyn commences the thread of his argument without fanfare, slipping directly into his conversational tone. There is something grammatically peculiar in the first passage, where a long parenthesis is marked by an idiosyncratic use of colons, and the initial 'As' is not answered by any complementary 'so also' until the 'even so' at the beginning

¹⁶³ R. Ashton, *The English Civil War*, p.287 and n.119, p.423.

of the second paragraph, which rather disrupts the flow of the analogy. A simplified reading of the opening proposition runs 'just as natural or moral understanding grows with experience, so does religious understanding'. This is probably unexceptionable, but Walwyn extends this initial premise to defend his method of enquiry into belief, hoping to draw a clear rhetorical distinction between 'superstitious' and 'traditionall' belief on the one hand, and the warmly inclusive stance of all who seek a deeper understanding through enquiry, on the other. The reader is encouraged to take Walwyn's side through his assumption of general common-sense values, a rhetorical arm is extended around the reader's shoulders; 'Experience making the best Schoole-master...', 'I suppose it will be acknowledged by all experienced Christians...' (*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.265).

It is questionable, however, how effective such a strategy would have been in the highly-charged atmosphere of religious debate that prevailed, since while Walwyn appeals to the judgement of experience and 'true rules of reason' he soon turns to an attack on merely 'traditional' believers. Such believers are only concerned with 'the reputation it brings them', they are

Champions for whats in fashion : ever running
with the streame..when they are zealous for
vulgar opinions they think they are zealous for
God..when they revile, abuse, and hale men before
the Magistrates, and even kill and destroy them,
they think they do God good service
(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.266)

Walwyn then extends his argument, suggesting that religion is ill-understood, and when improperly grounded runs easily into 'extreames' (*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.266)

because in our tryalls and examinations, we have
not that heedfull care, which is absolutely
necessary, to free our Judgments from
absurdities or improper things: common and
vulgar arguments catching fast on us too
suddenly; and so we engage over violently,
averring and maintayning without giving due time

to our consideration to worke and debate itselfe
into necessary conclusions.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.266)

This amounts to a counter-attack on Edwardes and his ilk, whose constant theme is of religious enthusiasts running into extremes. Contrary to Edwardes' implication that heresy arises through free-thinking, Walwyn states that it is the lack of serious consideration of religious tenets that leads to excess.

The standard argument of the orthodox is then retold in terms which tend to undermine it. Contrary to Walwyn's defence of rational debate, his opponents say '...the Cobler ought not to go beyond his last : what are the learned for...why chuse wee wise and juditious men...to reforme, and settle Religion...' (p.266) This is not only a reference to superior clerical education and expertise but also to the Presbyterian-dominated Westminster Assembly, which was convened to establish a religious settlement. Walwyn asserts that if any enquiry into such people's beliefs is attempted it does not produce a discussion but a series of accusations. His parenthetical aside 'in loving tearmes and for their better information' is an attempt to ameliorate the aggression present in his characterisation of his opponents. As such it seems ironical, even gratuitous, a stage whisper directed to the audience.

If their ignorance and superstition appeare so grosse and palpable, that (in loving tearmes, and for their better information) you demand how they come to know there is a God, or that the Scriptures are the word of God: their common answer is, doe you deny them: it seems you doe? Otherwise why doe you aske such questions? If they offer to proove by some common received argument: and you shew the weaknesse thereof: they'le goe nigh to tell you to your face, and report for certaine behind your back, to all they know, or can know, that you are an Atheist, that you deny there is a God, and deny the scriptures to be the word of God: nor doe they hate any sort of men so much, as those who are inquisitive after knowledge, judgeing them as busie bodyes, men of unquiet spirits, that know not when they are well, or when they have sufficient: for their parts, they are constant

in one, for the substance; their principles are not of yesterday but of many yeares standing: and the most learned and wise are of their way, and why should not others be as well content as they, is it fit (say they) that every one should follow his own understanding in the worship of God, wee see what comes of it; when men once forsake the beaten road (the Kings high way) in Religion, into how many by-pathes, doe they runne, nay, whether would they not runne, if our care were not to hedge them in.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.266-267)

The interpolation of 'the Kings high way' as an equivalent of 'the beaten road' into the reported speech of the superstitious believer associates such respectable orthodoxy with disreputable Royalism, and monarchical control of the Church. Walwyn effectively conveys the inquisitorial tone of his interlocutor through a welter of rhetorical questions.

The two sides of the argument are thus set out, Walwyn maintaining on his own account that enquiry is more likely to produce truth than error, and a surer guide to truth than mere custom.

Walwyn then attacks 'worldly Polititians' who use the superstitious against

any man who out of the principles of true Religion opposeth their ends; at him they let loose these ignorant and morall christians, furnish them with reproachfull tales, and falshoods, against him, call him Atheist, Infidell, Heretick, Scismatic, any thing
(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.267)

which clearly reflects Walwyn's own experience, as is reinforced by *Walwyns Just Defence*. The function of the superstitious as instruments of policy is also portrayed in *A Parable*. Walwyn's use of the term 'morall' is unusual, and refers, I think, to the classic radical dichotomy of Law and Grace¹⁶⁴. Walwyn's Christianity does not arise from morality, or from the Law, it is not supported on practical social grounds; rather his faith gives rise to expectations of social justice.

¹⁶⁴ O.E.D. p.1070, +12 'Obs. Rare...Pertaining to manners and customs.'

As for those who seem to exceed the bounds of religion,
Walwyn admits that perhaps they do need a little hedging in.

Those others who are startled in their
consciencs, and roused by the word of God, out
of this worldly way of religion, or running with
the streame, it is a hard matter to hold them to
a due pace, in the persute of necessary
knowledge or to keepe them to a propper Method,
or to obtaine this of them, that they receive
nothing as a truth, which they see admiteth of
an absurdity.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.267)

Walwyn relies on his metaphors of reasonableness; 'a due
pace', 'necessary knowledge', 'propper method', to restrain
the adventurous from 'obsurdity'. After an extended
meditation on the inadvisability of going too fast in
matters of 'Divine knowledge' - what George Fox was to call
'running into imaginations', Walwyn opposes the effects of
Christian love on the behaviour of the believer: ('settlesh
a man in peace and rest: makes him like unto the Angels') to
those of superstition;

superstition troubleth and makes a man wilde, a
superstitious man suffereth neither God nor man
to live in peace...he apprehendeth God, as one
anxious, spiteful, hardly contented easily
moved, with difficulty appeased, examining our
actions after the human fashion of a severe
Judge, that watcheth our steps, which hee
proveth true by his manner of serving him, hee
trembleth for feare is never secure, fearing he
never doth well, and that he hath left some
thing undone, by ommission whereof, all is worth
nothing that he hath done.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.268-269)

This description of the psychological pressures generated by
the relationship of the Calvinist God with the believer sits
comfortably with the many accounts of religious anxiety and
despair given in the spiritual autobiographies of such as
Richard Norwood¹⁶⁵. Walwyn's broken rhythms portray this
anxiety in a mimetic act. God suffers in this relationship
too; '...a superstitious man suffereth neither God nor man to

¹⁶⁵ See John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, Chap.2, pp.85-126;
The Journal of Richard Norwood, Surveyor of Bermuda, ed. W.F.Craven &
W.B.Hayward, New York, 1945; Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.34-35 &
n.38.

live in peace...', an early version of the phrase 'God-botherer'. Walwyn then rounds on the lack of positive, rather than negative interest in one's neighbour.

As for his body, or estate, that's no part of his care, hee is not so hasty to runne into his poore neighbours house, to see what is wanting there, hee may ly upon a bed, or no bed, covering or no covering, be starved through cold or hunger, over burthened with labour, be sick, lame, or diseased

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.269)

But this will not concern the 'morall Christians', who are only concerned with the form of his belief. Walwyn's indignation here is finely weighted.

One would not think it were possible man could be so blind, or so inconsiderate as to immagin, that God would be thus mocked, thus madly served, contrary to the whole tenor of the Scriptures

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.265)

For Walwyn, as for Coppe, formal religion concerns itself with the inessential, ignoring the central necessity of loving thy neighbour, and practical charity. Walwyn declares that, as for Christianity:

It is not yet knowne what it is, in its excellency, the end and issue thereof, is too good to bee deserved, or discerned, by a people that are not yet broad awake, they strike him that brings them more light; then they can well endure.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.270)

Walwyn implies that he is such a bearer of excess light, and then turns from the general character of religious faith to the particulars of his own case.

All the evill and reproach I have suffered, hath beene by occasion of my forwardnesse to do others good: my freenesse in discourse..hath been perverted, misconstrued, and made use of to my prejudice.

I accompt nothing more vain, then to discourse meerly for discourse sake, nay, it is painfull and irksome to me... And my manner is, whatever is in debate, to search it thorowly, being of an

opinion, that, what is really true, stands the firmer, for being shaken: like a house that is built upon a rock.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.270)

This opinion is not universally shared, however, and nor is his manner widely understood. It is through this rational enquiry into the grounds of others' belief that Walwyn has alienated those he calls 'morall' christians.

Walwyn either does not realise, or does not care, that this must seem to them an attack on the *basis* of their faith, particularly when he himself declines to reveal his own grounds to those he describes as 'timerous, scrupulous people'. This is a dangerous game, and bespeaks an arrogance which has gone unremarked by scholars. His debating style seems to have been logical, (or rhetorical, in the idiom of the time), and there is a threat implied in 'search it thorowly', and 'shaken'.

I have been much troubled, to observe men earnestly engage to maintaine the strongest maximes and principles by weak arguments; the weakness whereof, I have attempted to manifest, that I might discover the weaknesse of such practises, and to make it evident, that fundamentall truthes support all things, and need no supporters: *Thou bearest not the root, but the root, thee.*

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.270)

But Walwyn rarely does engage with the fundamental truths, as he soon states, thus contributing to the appearance of one who seeks to 'discover [expose] the weakness of' Christian belief itself. What results scarcely seems as surprising as Walwyn's wounded tone might imply.

But this my free dealing..hath found this evill returne, they have reported me, to deny that there is a God, when all I have only denied the validity of a weak argument, produced to prove that there is a God; it being too too common to insist upon meere notional indigested arguments

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.270)

The same goes for the belief that the scriptures are the word of God; he is 'most uncharitably slandered...because I have opposed insufficient arguments produced to prove them such: and because at the same time I have refused to shew

the grounds inducing me to believe them.' (p.270) This results in '...much impatience and discontent,' but instead of offering better reasons as reassurance to the timorous, Walwyn takes this discontent as justification for withholding them.

Now it hath been my lot to be drawne into discourses of this nature for the most part by timerous, scrupulous, people, in whom, I have discovered so much impatience, and discontent, at the shaking of their arguments, that I have not discerned any reason to open my selfe at that time; yet I never parted with any of them, but I alwayes professed that I did believe, both that there is a God, & that the Scriptures are the Word of God, though I judged their grounds not good; and withall, that if they would be so ingenious as to acknowledge the weaknesse of their arguments, I would then shew them my ground of faith; or if at any time they stood in need, I would not be wanting to the uttermost of my power to supply them, but I have seldome found any, who in the heat of contest and prosecution of dispute, have been qualified, to receive, what I had to say, touching this matter, their apprehension and mine being at too great a distance therein.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.271)

This behaviour may not seem peculiar to us, more used since 'the Enlightenment' to free enquiry into all things, but in the context of the religious debates of the Civil War period it seems both unusual and dangerous.

Walwyn is about to reveal his grounds in print. The crucial paragraph is as absolute a statement of the inefficacy of reason in matters of belief as any made by the most mystical radical. Walwyn is far from a rationalist in our terms, (if he were, he would be a sceptic), although his rationalistic enquiry into belief lends this impression, as does the rationalistic discursive field in which he frames the largest part of his writing. The passage starts with a tightrope-walk over the abyss, withholding the affirmation of belief behind a blockade of negative formulas. In this it rehearses Walwyn's debating style, provocative and dangerous.

That there is a God: I never did believe through any convincing power I have ever discerned by my utmost consideration of any natural argument or reason I ever heard or read: But it is an unexpressible power, that in a forcible manner constraines my understanding to acknowledge and beleve there is a God, and so to beleve that I am fully perswaded there is no considerat man in the world but doth beleve there is a God.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.271)

The certainty of belief is portrayed as an overwhelming force, even an act of violence against reason: 'an unexpressible power, that in a forcible manner constraines my understanding'. Walwyn's 'reason' or 'understanding' is forced to recognise a power greater than itself, a power 'unexpressible' and beyond containment, quite outside the realm of discourse, which 'constraines' (an interesting choice of term, indicating both violence and restriction, a marking of allowable limits to discursive rationality) his understanding. The conclusion of the paragraph takes this compulsion to believe a step further, into the minds of others. There is some ambiguity in Walwyn's expression here; he could possibly intend to convey the idea that he *therefore* believes any thinking person must agree with him, 'and so to beleve that I am fully perswaded...', but this would be an unnecessarily complex construction. My reading is rather that Walwyn is saying 'and so [completely, intensely] to beleve [this] that I am perswaded there is [can be] no considerat man but doth beleve...' Walwyn is relying on his own certainty being equally present in each thinking person; his own is so intense that he cannot imagine it to be otherwise.

If Walwyn is rationalistic in his discursive style by seventeenth-century standards, and presents himself in debate as a sceptic, this is far from the whole picture. Modern rationalism implies scepticism, but the rationalism of Descartes is still predicated on the final guarantee of God's truth to man.

A similar case is then made out for the scriptures as the word of God:

And, *That the Scriptures are the Word of God*, I shall clearly make the same profession, That I have not beleevved them so to be, by force of any argument I have ever heard or read, I rather find by experience, most, if not all arguments, produced in prejudice thereof: (Art, argument, and compulsive power in this case holding resemblance with the mighty strong wind, the Earth quake and fire, distracting, terrifying and scorching the minds of men) but I beleeve them through an irresistible perswasive power that from within them (like unto the soft still voyce wherein God was) hath pierced my judgment and affection in such sort, that with abundance of joy and gladnesse I beleeve, and in beleevving have that Peace which passeth all utterance or expression; and which hath appeared unto me after so many sad conflicts of a distracted conscience, and wounded spirit, that it is to me a heaven upon earth:

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.271-272)

The two parenthesised passages draw an analogy between the Biblical citation at the head of the text (1 Kings 19.11,12.) and human methods of convincement. Just as neither wind, earthquake nor fire contained the voice of God, so human art, argument and compulsion cannot produce true conviction. The earthquake/argument analogy fits Walwyn's debating style; 'my manner is, whatever is in debate, to search it thorowly, being of an opinion, that, what is really true, stands the firmer, for being shaken: like a house that is built upon a rock.'

Walwyn then returns to reproving those who neglect their own faults in the pursuit of the faults of others, using the familiar Biblical references to motes in eyes and Pharisees. This has its personal edge, in that Walwyn clearly feels there is a campaign of denigration building against him, and rises to its sharpest expression in a short paragraph projecting a vicious portrait of slanderers.

He who is glad of his neighbours defamation, would not be sory at his ruine: a slanderer would be a murderer but for feare: and therefore, every honest vertuous religious man should shun a slanderer, as he would shun a Serpent.

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.273)

'Serpent' is of course a synonym for Satan, and a slanderer is represented as a murderer who is too much of a coward to kill. An organised campaign of defamation comes to fruition in *Walwyns Wiles* (April 1649), and he clearly feels wounded in *Walwyns Just Defence*. The forthcoming tracts *The Vanitie of the Present Churches* and *The Bloody Project* can hardly have calmed Independent feelings. Walwyn can be both criticised and excused on political grounds. Firstly, some of Walwyn's care for his own reputation is personal and economic; as a merchant he must be seen to be trustworthy, his reputation is his capital. As for the political aspects, Walwyn's constant stress on agreement and unity must lead him to deplore divisive tactics which intend the divorce of Leveller support from the Baptist and Gathered Churches. Whether an assault on the religious sensitivities of the godly is calculated to assist in the cause of unity, I am not sure. Perhaps some of Walwyn's reputation as a moderate politician (or Machiavell, or Jesuit) is due to comparison with the extremes of fervour and contumely sometimes generated in the texts of John Lilburne or Richard Overton¹⁶⁶. Nevertheless, the objections to critical attitudes and the relaying of slanders have both personal and political justification, as well as scriptural precedent. Walwyn's repeated attacks on the Presbyterian Edwardes, coupled with a growing feud with elements of the Independent churches, make his appeals for unity appear to his opponents as partisan statements in support of seditious petitions. Further, although displaying a sometimes provocative respect when addressing Parliament¹⁶⁷, Walwyn's Leveller petitions (*Gold Tried in the Fire*, in Taft, p.276-293) were treated so dismissively that his complete loyalty to Parliament and absolute commitment to unity can be questioned, especially in the light of Cromwell's defection to the Army. An increasing despair at Parliament's refusal to consider the reforms outlined in the 'Large Petition' must have taken hold of Leveller leaders over the coming months.

¹⁶⁶ Walwyn is accused of being a Jesuit in *Walwyns Wiles* (April 1649).

¹⁶⁷ The Commons at this time objected to being referred to as 'the Supream Power', as this implied no constitutional role for Lords or King.

A largely autonomous campaign of Leveller-style activism was taking hold in the army, very much the Leveller's natural constituency in religious and social makeup. An alliance with them must have seemed irresistible, despite its confirming the split within the victorious alliance of the first Civil War. As the various interests, usually referred to in terms of their religious affiliation, attempted to take from military success the gains they believed were their due, it became clearer that there was neither general agreement, nor the political climate to allow compromise on any particular set of social arrangements.

Walwyn turns from criticism to express his determination to continue in a work which he clearly associates with the heart of Christian doctrine: a greater equality is the necessary product of greater charity; practical concern for others a necessary consequence of love.

The liberty of my native Country, and the freedome of all consciencious people hath been, and still is pretious in my esteeme: nor shall I be discouraged (by any the unworthy slanders cast upon me) from a just and due prosecution of both, according to my place and calling: I shall make bold to deceive the deceiver and his instruments therein: I should be glad to see the Educated and customary morall Christians become Christians indeed, and cease to persecute: I should exceedingly rejoyce to see the superstitious, become really religious, and to see babes; become strong men in Christ, and all bend their endeavours to deliver the captive, and set the oppressed free, to reclaime the vicious, and to labour the saving of the lost sheep of the house of England: To see charity abound, and all envy, malice, and worldly mindednesse to cease forever, and not to be named amongst us, as becommeth Saints indeed: to see all men ingenious, loving, friendly and tender-hearted one towards another: but I must neither be silent, nor slothfull till I see it, nor sorow as one without hope of seeing it:

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.273-274)

Reference to the 'deceiver' again associates Walwyn's opponents with the forces of Satan. In conjunction with the idiosyncratic use of 'morall' as a synonym for 'customary',

Walwyn here employs the term 'Educated' to imply ignorance and superstition.

His conclusion conveys through its simplicity a sincerity and humility which accord precisely with the sense:

I have no quarrell to any man, either for unbeliefe or misbeleefe, because I judge no man beleeveeth any thing, but what he cannot choose but beleefe; it is misery enough to want the comfort of true beleeving, and I judge the most convincing argument that any man can hold forth unto another, to proove himselfe a true sincere beleever, is to practise the uttermost that which his faith binds him unto: more of the deeds of Christians, and fewer of the arguments would doe a good deal more good to the establishing of those that stagger: It being not the leaves but the fruit that nourisheth and carrieth the seed with it, Shew me thy faith by thy workes;...if faith worke, it workes by love: Let us all therefore hence-forth walk in love, even as Christ has loved.....

(*A Still and Soft Voice*, in Taft, p.274)

It is fair to say that in the view of many of his contemporaries it was probably his works that put his faith in question as much as anything else. The leaves/fruit/seed imagery is a further example of Walwyn's comparatively rare use of the radical discursive mode.

*

Walwyn's relaxed style generates its own authority. The grace of his writing inheres in the orderly but conversational range of his periods. Sentences and paragraphs are usually co-extensive, but rarely exceed the extent of an imaginable speech, and each period offers at least a recognisable reiteration of recently expressed ideas if not an appreciable advance in the argument. And an argument, or series of arguments there is; firstly in his own defence, secondly against 'superstition' as opposed to true or revealed religion, and thirdly against rumours and scandals as a metonym for broader political and religious divisions. The feeling of an argument is sustained with a debating approach which amounts to structuring the text as a

series of premises and conclusions. Although Walwyn underwent no University education, some form of syllogistic philosophical structure must have been pervasive in his culture, both through the influence of Clerical religious discourse and the undoubted prevalence of lawyers (and formerly Courtiers) in business circles. Many Parliamentarians were lawyers. Expressions such as 'Now both are best known...' (p.268) seem derived from legal or philosophical Rhetoric. His periods frequently begin with the continuation devices of logical argument which make for textual cohesion: 'But', 'For', 'Yet', 'Now', 'On the contrary', 'But generally', 'As for'. This appearance of logic probably encouraged his enemies to characterise him as a 'Jesuit', as syllogistic reasoning was a speciality of this feared and alien order. In contrast, Walwyn produces occasional bursts of mimetic writing, as in the jerky rhythms describing superstition beginning 'superstition troubleth...' (Taft, p.268-269, cited above) which inhabits and exhibits the anxiety of such minds. Walwyn's mimicry extends to including recognisable items of vocabulary used by the 'superstitious', as in the citation from p.266-267 (above), with 'unquiet spirits', 'constant in one', 'the substance', 'wee see what comes of it'. He uses this vocabulary only as a polemical tool, holding cant up for ridicule. He also contrives a convincing pitch of indignation with the minimum of rhetorical flourish. (Taft, p.269, cited above).

Walwyn's strictures on customary belief rarely take the form of the form/power type/truth dichotomies (deriving from law/grace, and including letter/spirit) of those radicals who see all contemporary events as metaphorically or typically foreshadowed by Biblical precedent. The lack of this vocabulary of revolutionary mysticism (soon to become so prevalent) may be revealing of Walwyn's attitude. He does not seem a convinced providentialist - a Fifth Monarchist or Ranter for example, even a Cromwellian - who would see God as taking direct political action through historical contingencies. In this his outlook is more in tune with that of our own times than either Lilburne or Overton, or indeed

the Ranters and Quakers who were to fall heir to Leveller aspirations. In Wolfe's opinion, *A Still and Soft Voice* 'reveals the intellectual cleavage between the relatively pious Independent leaders and the secular Levellers', and while this is true of Walwyn's frame of reference and the tone of his writing, his ideas are supported by religious faith, not secular reasoning¹⁶⁸. The dispute over whether Walwyn is more 'religious' or 'political' seems to me anachronistic, even parochial: surely, to Walwyn there is no practical distinction. While Wolfe gives an account of *A Still and Soft Voice* which justly praises it: 'A single reading leaves the twentieth-century critic with a conviction of its permanent worth in the history of ideas', he entirely ignores the highly contentious nature and form of its argument, seeing in it only a desire to convert through reason¹⁶⁹. Ernest Sirluck detects signs of mutual influence between Walwyn and John Milton¹⁷⁰, *The Compassionate Samaritane* having influenced *Areopagitica*, and indeed, vice-versa. If so, Walwyn did not go unread.

Walwyn emerges as a man of extraordinary contradictions which seem not to cause him any sensation of conflict. He asserts the primacy of revealed religion in a rational tone. He pleads for toleration of all religious beliefs, but attacks *The Vanitie of the Present Churches*. He abuses 'polititians' but makes detailed constitutional proposals and organises a popular movement in their support. He condemns the use of the arts of persuasion to sway public opinion in pamphlets that attempt exactly that. As a member of the monopoly Merchant Adventurers Company he condemns monopolies and foreign luxury goods and espouses free trade. It is perhaps not surprising that his contemporary opponents (chiefly John Price, according to Brailsford) suspected him

¹⁶⁸ Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*, p.363.

¹⁶⁹ Don M. Wolfe, *Milton in the Puritan Revolution*, p.170.

¹⁷⁰ Ernest Sirluck, (ed.) *Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol. II, 1643-1648*, Oxford University Press, London, (1959), p.87. 'The close similarity of all this to the *Areopagitica's* exordium, proposition, and peroration.....leave no doubt that Milton had read and been influenced by *The Compassionate Samaritane*. Most interestingly, the revised edition of the *Samaritane* (January 5, 1645) appears in turn to have been influenced by *Areopagitica*.'

as a Machiavellian, Jesuit, or Atheist¹⁷¹. Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of *A Still and Soft Voice* is the withholding of its affirmation of belief in God and the Scriptures as the word of God noted above. It seems astonishing that Walwyn should choose to employ a formulation which so toys with the reader's expectations. It is perhaps this which arouses the suspicions of David Wootton. For my part, I take it that Walwyn intends and even enjoys the perturbation and tension he sets up by this means. Just as his exposition of the horrors of the Law in *The Power of Love* precedes and intensifies the release of the blessings of Love, and just as his impersonation of Thomas Edwardes in *A Prediction* travels from sinfulness to realisation and repentance, Walwyn seeks to evoke the dynamics of revelation through his strategy of delay¹⁷².

H.N. Brailsford's judgement, that 'By its wit and verbal felicity and the range of its thought the best of his writing deserves the rank of literature.' seems to me entirely just¹⁷³. Joseph Frank has praised Walwyn for 'his flair for the quietly dramatic, his intimacy of tone, and his restrained forcefulness'¹⁷⁴. What has been less remarked is Walwyn's highly combative stance, a stance which has perhaps been obscured by the calm surface of his prose. Walwyn is a ruthless propagandist, and by the standards of his time an extremist. It is certainly possible to see why his contemporary opponents characterised him as Machiavellian. Brailsford claims that 'Walwyn's subtlety terrified his opponents, for this master-craftsmen pulled wires silently in the dark.'¹⁷⁵ The subtle pulling of wires by a master-craftsmen, surely the sort of activity of which Walwyn complains in *Some Considerations*, sounds an authentically Machiavellian procedure.

¹⁷¹ H.N.Brailsford, *The Levellers & the English Revolution*, p.542.

¹⁷² *A Prediction of Mr.Edwards His Conversion and Recantation*, in Taft, pp.227-237.

¹⁷³ H.N.Brailsford, *The Levellers & the English Revolution*, p.59.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Frank, *The Levellers*, p.35.

¹⁷⁵ H.N.Brailsford, *The Levellers & the English Revolution*, p.62.

The legacy of the Levellers has aroused considerable discussion; the number of political positions for which they are claimed as ancestors reveals as much. Walwyn is often referred to as a 'rationalist', and sometimes 'sceptic'. These are not, I think, terms which Walwyn would either recognise or welcome. Walwyn is a humanist in the religious tradition of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola rather than the rationalist/sceptical tradition of Hume and Locke¹⁷⁶. The association of Humanism and scepticism, or of scepticism and unbelief, is a later one, or at least one not at all native to Walwyn.

¹⁷⁶ Tony Davies, *Humanism*, Routledge, London, (1997), pp.95-98.

1647-1649: The end of the Levellers.

In 1647 the Levellers were at the height of their influence. The Army entered London in August, exerting pressure on a Parliament determined to settle with the King. Leveller 'Agitators', elected in April from each Regiment, were included in the 'Putney Debates' of the General Council in October. Perhaps fearing mutiny, Cromwell refused Leveller requests for a rendezvous of the whole Army, instead arranging separate musters. The rendezvous at Corkbush Field near Ware (November fifteenth, 1647) was attended by both Lilburne and Rainborough, neither of whom intervened, and also by the regiments of Colonel Harrison and Robert Lilburne, who had not been ordered to attend. Robert Lilburne's Regiment, led by Captain Bray¹⁷⁷ wore the Leveller *Agreement of the People* in their hats. The potential mutiny was suppressed with one execution and the minimum of fuss, army discipline, loyalty and the assurances of their commanders combining to soften the soldiers' determination. The revered army chaplain John Saltmarsh rode to the headquarters at Windsor and denounced the army for deserting the Lord and imprisoning Saints. William Dell also severed links with the army.

The King now allied with the Scots, promising a Presbyterian settlement, and the second Civil War broke out, with risings in Wales, Essex and Kent. Simultaneously, Parliament debated the long-delayed Blasphemy Bill which Walwyn had criticised in embryo (*A Demurre*). Cromwell opposed the Bill, and was subsequently to use the New Model Army as a base against Parliament.

From this point on, relations between the (distinctly heterodox) New Model Army and Parliament were to become increasingly strained. The Welsh had already been defeated before the Scots invaded England again in July 1648. Leveller sentiments in the army were put aside in the face

¹⁷⁷ Mentioned in the *Fiery Flying Roll*, in Hopton, p.30.

of renewed conflict. The Scots were routed at Preston in August and pursued into Scotland to defeat at Dunbar. It was after this battle that James Nayler left the army due to ill health. By the end of September Presbytery was established by Parliament as the national church.

Walwyn had bitterly attacked the renewal of hostilities in *The Bloody Project* on the grounds that no-one knew what they were fighting for. Lilburne was released from the Tower on August the first 1648, after a petition with 10,000 signatures had been delivered to parliament. Surprisingly, his release was supported by Sir John Maynard, both a Lord and a Presbyterian, in the hope that he would assist in Cromwell's impeachment. There was some degree of co-operation or at least sympathy between Cromwell and the Levellers over religious toleration. It was quite possible that Cromwell himself, and certain that several of his Officers, would have been liable to at least life imprisonment under its provisions. Civilian Leveller campaigning continued with the *Large Petition* of September eleventh. On the twentieth of November, General Council deliberations resulted in the army's *Remonstrance* (which adopted elements of Leveller policy) being delivered to Parliament¹⁷⁸.

On December sixth the Army moved against Parliament in what became known as 'Pride's Purge'¹⁷⁹. Around Christmas, the army seized the King on the Isle of Wight, and with the agreement of the purged and cowed Parliament resolved on his trial for treason. The King was executed in January 1649.

Cromwell next turned his attention to the Levellers. On the twenty-seventh of March 1649, Lilburne was offered a well-paid post, which he rejected. His pamphlet *The Second Part of Englands New Chains* was immediately condemned by Parliament as 'scandellous and seditious'. Cromwell spoke against it in Parliament. On March the twenty-eighth,

¹⁷⁸ It is generally agreed that the *Remonstrance* was drafted by Henry Ireton, Commissary-General, and Cromwell's son-in-law.

Walwyn, Overton, Lilburne and Thomas Prince¹⁸⁰ were arrested for treason. Lilburne, Overton and Prince published their version of events in *The Picture of the Council of State*, and Walwyn, clearly already somewhat distanced from Leveller activity, in *The Fountain of Slaunder Discovered*. On May first, eight troops of cavalry based in the South mutinied en route to Ireland, just as the four prisoners published a third version of the *Agreement* from the Tower. The mutineers were overtaken by Cromwell and Fairfax at Burford and locked in the Church. On May seventeenth, three were executed. According to Howard Shaw, 'After they had defeated the Levellers at Burford, Fairfax and Cromwell were honoured with Doctorates of Civil Law at Oxford and entertained at a lavish banquet in the City of London; the men of property knew what they were about.'¹⁸¹

With army agitation quelled and the civilian leadership imprisoned, remaining Leveller support from Independents and Baptists evaporated. The execution of the King and the purge of Parliament were probably the minimum required by army sentiment. As Levellerism declined, late 1648 and 1649 saw the beginnings of Digger and Ranter publicity with *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *More Light Shining*, sometimes attributed to Gerrard Winstanley, and Coppe's *Some Sweet Sips*¹⁸². Once Walwyn and the other Levellers found their progress blocked by Cromwell's power politics the current of popular discontent ran in different channels, both practically and rhetorically. Despite Hill's assertion that 'Classical and Biblical allusions are now subordinated to the argument. Traditional techniques of controversy - following the adversary paragraph by paragraph, dissecting him at length - are becoming old-fashioned'¹⁸³, the coming wave of writers were to return to such traditional methods.

¹⁷⁹ The acknowledged authority on these events is David Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1971).

¹⁸⁰ A wholesale cheese merchant and Leveller treasurer.

¹⁸¹ Howard Shaw, *The Levellers*, Longmans, London, (1968), p.104. Coppe mentions this in *F.F.R.*, with obvious contempt.

¹⁸² Winstanley had been writing theological works from 1648. The 'colony' at St. George's Hill, Surrey, was established on April the first 1649.

¹⁸³ Christopher Hill, 'From Marprelate to the Levellers' (in) *Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, Vol.1, *Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England*, Harvester, Brighton, (1985), p.91.

It is interesting to note that the immediately succeeding 'True Levellers' or Diggers arise in the home counties, and the Ranters in the Midlands. The Quakers (sparked by George Fox from Leicestershire) originate still further north in Yorkshire and Westmorland. It is as if the ripples caused by some stone dropped in London were travelling slowly out from that centre. Gerrard Winstanley (and later the Quakers) called for a complete overthrow of 'Kingly power' to complete the process begun with the Civil War and the execution of the King. Abiezer Coppe and the Fifth Monarchists looked forward to a spiritual rebirth, a new dispensation, in which Christ would rule directly. While Gerrard Winstanley might be described, at a stretch, as 'secular' in tone, such a description could hardly be applied to Abiezer Coppe or the Quakers.

The execution of King Charles - a move of highly dubious legality - left a huge gap in British constitutional arrangements, and created a prolonged uncertainty over the appropriate form of Government. An uneasy alliance between the Cromwell-dominated army and the purged 'Rump' parliament ensued, which was succeeded by a series of unsuccessful constitutional experiments.

The King was not merely a concrete historical personage, nor yet the necessary capstone for the hierarchy of society, he was also very much a cultural touchstone, the head of the body politic, anointed by the Church in God's name. The beheading of the King was the symbolic and practical culmination of an extended process of conflict calling into question the entire cultural system, the discursive formation, that had sustained political authority and social cohesion. Some Seekers and millenarians felt that if this had happened, anything could happen; the rules had been thrown away. It is not without reason, then, that new manifestations of politico-mystical dissent should arise at this time, and that they should take strange new forms.

ABIEZER COPPE

Born May 1619 in Warwick, Coppe was by his own account religious as a child, and assailed by a Calvinist sense of sin. He attended Warwick School, where he was taught for three years by Thomas Dugard, who kept a diary, in Latin, which mentions Coppe¹⁸⁴. In 1641, he delivered sermons and lectures at Warwick when unqualified, and only twenty-two¹⁸⁵. There were connections between Dugard and Peter Sterry, whose theology shows antinomian sympathies, and who later became one of Cromwell's several Chaplains¹⁸⁶. In 1636, Coppe entered All Souls College, Oxford, and later became Postmaster at Merton College. At Merton, Coppe was taught by Ralph Button, Presbyterian and Hebraist, who moved to the modernising Gresham College in London at the outbreak of the Civil War¹⁸⁷. Gresham College was a Parliamentary institution, and such a move away from Royalist Oxford would indicate strong Parliamentary sympathies¹⁸⁸. About the same time, Coppe moved back to Warwickshire and became Chaplain to the regiment of Major George Purefoy at Compton House.

Richard Baxter described Coppe as a 're-baptizer' who 'pleads for Community, and against Propriety' when he met him in the Parliamentary army¹⁸⁹. Baxter also suggests Coppe

¹⁸⁴ See Ann Hughes 'Thomas Dugard and his Circle in the 1630's: A "Parliamentary-Puritan" Connexion?', *Historical Journal*, 29, (1986), pp.771-793; Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1987). Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol.XII, No.2, Autumn 1997, pp.173-205. Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Dayes: The Strange Work of Abiezer Coppe', *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol.XIII, No.2, Autumn 1998, pp.156-184. Kenny gives the most complete biographical information.

¹⁸⁵ See Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered', p.199 & n.3.

¹⁸⁶ Douglas Bush, *The Early Seventeenth Century 1600-1660: Jonson, Donne and Milton*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (Second Edition, 1962, reprinted 1990), pp.358-359.

¹⁸⁷ For Button, see Greaves and Zaller.

¹⁸⁸ Christopher Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1997).

¹⁸⁹ Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof* (London, 1651), p.148. Coppe's arrest weighs against Robert Kenny's portrayal of Coppe as orthodox except in a short period from 1649-1650. Kenny's article 'In These Last Dayes' usefully stresses Coppe's early Presbyterian conformity but his contention that the later Coppe is 'quiescent' is not secure; the evidence could be read either way. Certainly, the post-Newgate Coppe is less in the public eye than in

had been imprisoned in Coventry around 1646. Early in 1649 Coppe began publication with a short *Preface to St. John's Divinity*, (dated 'Jan. 13th 1648') which was followed by *Some Sweet Sips, of some Spiritual Wine* in the same year. Coppe also wrote the preface to Richard Coppin's *Divine Teachings*, printed in September¹⁹⁰.

The publication of *A Fiery Flying Roll* (collected by Thomason on the fourth of January 1650) provoked an almost immediate response from the Council of State, and by the thirteenth he was under arrest in Coventry. On February the first, Parliament ordered *A Fiery Flying Roll* burned, and he was moved to Newgate in March. Brought before the 'Committee for suppressing licentious and impious Practices' on the twenty-seventh of September, contemporary accounts suggest he threw nuts or fruit about the room¹⁹¹. He wrote two retractions in Newgate, the second under the supervision of Parliamentary propagandist Marchamont Nedham and the ecumenicist John Dury¹⁹². Dury was inclined to seek agreement among Protestants of all persuasions, and Nedham was another young man who had on occasion got into trouble for 'railing'

his Ranter period, and he was buried in his Parish Church, but he continued to preach in 'Conventicles', and published *Divine Fire-Works*, the grim millenarianism of which Kenny fails to explore in any depth.

¹⁹⁰ Andrew Hopton, (ed.), *Abiezer Coppe: Selected Writings*, Aporia Press, London, (1987), p.9; Nigel Smith, (ed.), *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century*, Junction Books, London, (1983), pp.11-12; Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Dayes', p.164.

¹⁹¹ Hopton, p.10; *The Weekly Intelligencer of the Common-Wealth*, 1-8/10/1650, p.10; *The Routing of the Ranters*, (London, 1650), p.2; *The Ranters Ranting*, in Davis, *Fear*, p.162.

¹⁹² John Dury, (1596-1680), son of a Scottish clergyman. Educated partly in Leyden, where his father (Robert Dury) had settled when banished. Promoted education and ecumenicism. Associate of Hartlib and Comenius. From 1630-1633 and 1654-1656 he travelled tirelessly throughout Europe attempting to reconcile Lutherans and Calvinists. Minister for Merchant Adventurers company in Holland. Member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. In 1650, when he engaged with Coppe, he was library-keeper at St James Palace under Bulstrode Whitelocke. Robert Greaves and Richard Zaller, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, Vol.1, Harvester Press, Brighton, (1982), pp.237-238. See also Durie, John, in *D.N.B.* Vol.VI, pp.261-263; Haller, *Tracts on Liberty*, n.53, pp.64-65. Marchamont Nedham, (1620-1678), born Burford, educated All Souls, Oxford. Age 23, he began to write the Parliamentary Newsbook *Mercurius Britannicus*. Impeached by the House of Lords in 1646, he edited the royalist *Mercurius Pragmaticus* from 1647. Imprisoned in Newgate June 1649. Next edited *Mercurius Politicus*, (Parliamentarian and anti-Scottish), on which he worked with Milton. In 1653 he edited the Cromwellian *Public Intelligencer*. In 1659, the *Moderate Informer*. He fled to Holland at the Restoration, returned, and worked as a Doctor. He was last employed by Charles II in 1676, and died shortly after. Greaves & Zaller, Vol.II, pp.258-259. See

in print. Coppe and Nedham had been at All Souls together. By the twenty-third of September he was free, preaching a 'recantation' sermon at Burford. After this the record is silent for several years, although George Fox, the Quaker, reports being visited in prison at Charing Cross (1655) by 'one Cobbe and a great company of Ranters'¹⁹³. Coppe changed his name to Dr. Higham and settled in Barnes. Shortly after Nayler underwent his extraordinary trial and spectacular punishment, Coppe returned to publication, although with what I take to be a narrower, more personal focus than previously. In January 1657 *Divine Fire Works* was published under the ascription 'ABHIAM'.

Coppe died in August 1672, and was buried in Barnes Church. 'A Character of a True Christian', a song, was published posthumously in 1680.

SOME SWEET SIPS OF SOME SPIRITUAL WINE

Coppe's first major work (published in 1649, but at least partly written late in 1648) contains in embryo all the characteristic elements of style and theology which he was to develop over the course of his career; his habitual hints and deferrals, playful shifts of register, ecstatic poetry, urge to transcendence, prophetic mimicry, threats of divine retribution, insinuations of a new 'dispensation' or set of divine laws, and of human perfectibility, or at least union with an internal God.

Some Sweet Sips was published by Giles Calvert, the radical bookseller who had published Familist and Behmenist tracts, and was later to publish the Quakers. 1648 & 1649 were a highly significant juncture in the course of the English Revolution, including the purge of Parliament by the New Model Army and the execution of the King.

also, *D.N.B.* Vol.XIV, pp.159-164; Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, pp.150-155. See also Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.325-326.

Some Sweet Sips consists of five 'Epistles' preceded by an extensive title page and a list of contents which covers four sides with some sixty points. These contents are so detailed (sometimes even exceeding in detail the actual text) that a first reading of *Some Sweet Sips* seems already an act of repetition. Further deferral is exhibited by the first three Epistles being portrayed as introductory to a correspondence contained in Epistles Four & Five. The inclusion of a correspondence and the epistolary form as a whole introduce a dialogic element¹⁹⁴.

It seems that from the outset the act of writing involves the construction of a new identity. Coppe seeks to write himself into a new existence, taking a new position in relation to language and society. On the title-page Coppe describes himself as 'a late converted JEW' and reports his name in Hebrew as 'My Father is of help'¹⁹⁵. In the course of the work Coppe appropriates the language of the Song of Solomon, the Psalms, the Epistles of Paul, and at least a title from the Prophet Habukkuk. His self-identification with Jewry reinforces his attempt to establish authority in and by the imitation of Biblical models and makes a three-fold symbolic use of Jewishness, firstly participating in a rising interest in Jewish culture and language¹⁹⁶, secondly promoting his belief in the imminence of Christ's direct rule (which is to be preceded by the 'conversion of the Jews' in Christian mythology)¹⁹⁷ and thirdly identifying by

¹⁹³ George Fox, *Journal*, (ed.), John L. Nickalls, Religious Society of Friends, London, (1975), p.195.

¹⁹⁴ This recurs forcefully in *Copp's Return to the Ways of Truth*, his second retraction of 1651, and such dialogism is a common feature of the disputational literature of the period.

¹⁹⁵ A proper name, one of the Sons of Gilead (Nu.26.30). See *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (eds), F. Brown, S.R. Driver, C.A. Briggs, p.4.

¹⁹⁶ See here David Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the readmission of the Jews to England*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1982), especially Ch. 2.; Nigel Smith, 'The Uses of Hebrew in the English Revolution', (in) *Language, Self and Society: A Social History of Language*, (eds), Peter Burke & Ray Porter, Polity Press, Cambridge, (1991), pp.51-71; Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.277-279.

¹⁹⁷ One of the steps which precedes Armageddon: 'Her [The great whore of Babylon's] destruction follows the conversion of the heathens and Jews according to Rom. 11:25-27' Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *The Apocalypse and Millenarianism in the 30 Years War*, (in) *War and Peace in Europe*, (ed.) Klaus Bussmann and Heinz Schilling, Munster/Osnabruck, 1998/1999;

implication 'formal' believers as unconverted Jews and thus as recalcitrant, and obstructive to the advent of such a new dispensation.

While deferral and excess might seem mutually antagonistic, both result from the same fundamental problem, the inexpressibility of personal revelation in linguistic terms¹⁹⁸. Coppe finds language inadequate, a 'dead letter', merely a collection of signs far removed from that signified. Deferral, embodied in Coppe's hints and insinuations, is partly a result of his appreciation of the dangerous nature of his revelation, but also due to the difficulty of containing within linguistic forms the power of his conviction. This results both in frank admissions of inability to express and abrupt switches of tone and topic. The linearity of language, which requires a form of logical progression through a predetermined order, restricts Coppe's desire to say everything at once, to expand in all directions simultaneously, like a blot, rather than in an orderly line. This impatience with linguistic constriction (construction) is part and parcel of his rejection of formalism in all its guises, a revolutionary impatience which becomes most marked in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, but which is apparent especially in *Epistle Three of Some Sweet Sips 'An Apologeticall and additional Word to the Reader, Specially the Schollars of Oxford, concerning the precedent and subsequent Epistles'*¹⁹⁹. Coppe adopts a technical and scholarly precision (as in 'precedent and subsequent'), which is suitable to the context - an address to scholars, and which in view of Coppe's expressed attitude to formalism and scholarly expertise can be seen to be ironic. This sententiousness is also apparent at other points in the

Christopher Hill, 'Till the Conversion of the Jews', (in) *Collected Essays, Vol.2*, Harvester Press, Brighton, (1986), pp.269-300, which takes Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* as its point of departure.

¹⁹⁸ In this I agree with Byron Nelson, 'The Ranters and the Limits of Language', (in) *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution*, (ed.), James Holstun, *Prose Studies* Vol.14, December 1991, No.3., Frank Cass, London, (1992), pp.60-75; 'the ultimate message of Ranter prose is, precisely, the limitations in language's ability to render ideas', p.63. I cannot concur, however, in his classification of 'Ranter prose' as a unitary phenomenon.

contents section and in the introductory and valedictory notes which frame the epistles; the title-page, on the other hand, is dominated by a Biblical tone.

To begin at the beginning, Coppe cites as his image of Canaan the cluster of grapes so huge it has to be carried on a staff between two people derived from Numbers (13.23), when a party is sent to explore the Promised Land. Coppe chooses this image to express God's bounty in offering the new revelation. He proposes a dichotomy between 'Spiritual Canaan' 'the land of the living' and the 'Fleshpots of the Land of Egypt', 'the house of Bondage'. This opposition extends to include economic forms, in Egypt 'they durst not minish ought from their bricks of theie daily taske' (sic) [perhaps 'their bricks of their daily']²⁰⁰, whereas in Canaan, 'like the Lords Lilly they toile not, but grow in the Land flowing with such wine, milke, and honey.-' This is traditional in the extreme, of course, but proposes an economic revolution concomitant with a spiritual one. Further, the opposition of 'house of Bondage' to the 'land of large Liberty, the house of Happiness' seems more political than economic. Note here Coppe's use of alliteration, a favourite aesthetic ploy of spoken discourse and the oral culture of preaching - or indeed play-writing - which dates back as far as Anglo-Saxon poetry in the British literary tradition. Coppe also employs assonance, 'Who must (no longer) hunger, or hanker....'

Coppe's alternative title, 'One of the Songs of Sion' is also supported by a Biblical citation 'The Lord is my strength and Song' (Exodus 15.2) which might serve as Coppe's artistic manifesto. The characterisation of *Some Sweet Sips* as a 'Song' is justified by the poetic passages it includes, especially in Epistles One, Two and Five. This 'song' is sung 'immediately' - a very interesting choice of

¹⁹⁹ As Thomas Corns justly remarks 'The rules and conventions of printing-house practice...are persistently violated in Coppe's works', *Uncloistered Virtue*, p.190.

²⁰⁰ As in Exodus 5,9. 'Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task.'

adverb - but 'occasioned mediately' by a 'Prophesie and Vision' (a dream relayed to Coppe in a letter from a Mrs.T.P.) an extract of which is included in the text 'with a Revelation, and Interpretation thereof, as from the Lord'. Coppe here makes his first association of himself with the voice of God.²⁰¹ There remains one Biblical citation of three that I have not yet related to the rest of the title-page : 'She that tarried at home devided the spoile' (Psalms 68.12). This may refer to Mrs.T.P. Coppe uses 'at home' in the text to denote those who have attained knowledge of the God within, Coppe's fellow-believers, who are 'within' and 'at home in the Lord'.

The title-page as a whole makes forcefully the identification of present circumstance with Biblical precedent, referring to the readers as 'Late Egyptian, and now bewildered Israelites'; that is, Jews who have escaped Egypt but who are now wandering in the wilderness. Coppe himself, a 'late converted Jew', is a stage or two further than the bewildered he addresses, (who might be characterised as 'Seekers'). Coppe's projected audience is listed at the head of Epistle Two, the 'Epistolar-Preparatory', which carefully includes both sides in the Civil War, the sectarian fringe and 'the Saints in Rome, New-England, Amsterdam, London, especially Hook Norton and thereabouts in Oxfordshire...'²⁰².

CONTENTS

The contents page displays Coppe's playful sententiousness. Excessive in detail, it gives two alternative glosses on the perfectly well-understood phrase 'the contents'. The first of these is 'The Titularity of the several little parcels, wrapt up in this little Fardle' which describes the text as a bundle containing parcels. There is a collision of discursive fields as the Latinate and obscure 'Titularity'

²⁰¹ The significance of dreams as 'visions' in the religious underground, especially the Baptist and Independent 'gathered' Churches from which Coppe emerges, is explored by Nigel Smith in *Perfection Proclaimed* pp.73-104.

²⁰² This may indicate that Mrs.T.P. herself lived in or near Hook Norton.

arrives via 'little parcels' at 'fardle'²⁰³. The second gloss is even more superfluous: 'The several Titles, of the severall ensuing Epistles here inserted,' but similarly denotes the text as a collection of separate Epistles rather than a single unified piece. The titles are then given: 'A Preambular, and cautionall hint to the Reader concerning the ensuing Epistles.' Typically, this is a 'hint'. The tone of the description is otherwise academic: 'Preambular' and 'ensuing' certainly give it this flavour, and Coppe seems to take pleasure in displaying his formal education in such lexical choices²⁰⁴. I do not know that Coppe is self-conscious in his use of clashing discourses, but I do feel that it represents his impatience with formality and propriety, even with a linguistically constrained, unitary consciousness.

The second epistle is called 'An Epistolar preparatory to the ensuring Epistles of [my father is of help] a late converted Jew'. 'Ensuring' is clearly a misprint for 'ensuing'.²⁰⁵

It is not until Epistle Four that we get past the introductions and apologies with which Coppe has deferred the relation of his message. Coppe here repeats the use of the term 'mediately'. The other half of this pair, 'immediately' seems to relate to the second term in each pair of Coppe's important dichotomies Flesh/Spirit, Form/Power, Type/Truth, Sign/Signified, (and also Shadow/Substance). Coppe is thus making a high claim for the

²⁰³ 'Fardel' or 'farthel' is in *Hamlet*, (3.1.75). 'Fardels' occurs quite often in Wyclif's *Early* (1 Kings 17.22, 25.13, & 30.24) and *Late* Bibles (Judges 19.17, Ruth 2.9, 1 Kings 17.22 & 35.13, Ezekiel 27.24). The Rheims Douai Bible follows Wyclif *Late* in Judges and Ruth. The Geneva Bible has 'fardels' at Acts 21.15. It is quite possible that Coppe remembers it from his Bible-studies, and it may be a Warwickshire word, (or a word surviving in Warwickshire), Shakespeare too being a Warwickshire man.

²⁰⁴ Nicholas McDowell takes Coppe's use of academic discourse as a counter-stroke to the depiction of the religious radicals as uneducated by heresiographers such as Daniel Featley, *The Dippers Dipt*, (1645), and Thomas Edwardes, *Gangraena*, (1646). This may be true, and certainly the contrast of Coppe's lexicon with that of his fellow-radicals and Ranters is notable. Further possibilities are that Coppe seeks to bolster his own authority through his use of this vocabulary, and that he enjoys this display of his learning. However, all commentators run the risk of falling the wrong side of the 'intentional fallacy' by deciding on an author's motivation.

purity of his inspiration and expression, a claim strengthened by his characterisation of his own work as 'One of the Songs of Sion' and the Biblical tag 'The Lord is my strength and Song'. That Coppe can claim his work to be 'sung Immediately' (which I take to mean 'directly' rather than 'at once') is an indication of the close association Coppe draws between God's voice and his own, a stance which is both within the Prophetic tradition established by the Old Testament and links with the theology of the indwelling God, 'begoddedness', and human participation in the Divine²⁰⁶.

The association of Coppe's voice with the voice of God is strengthened in the title of Epistle Five, where Coppe describes his reading of Mrs.T.P.'s vision as 'an interpretation of her Revelation, as from the Lord.'

The second half of the fifth point, after the semi-colon, is confusing.

together with an indiciall hint of some particular passages infolded, and unfolded in the Letters following, and that as followeth, as the Contents. --
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.43)²⁰⁷

I can only understand this as being unrelated, despite appearances, to the title of Epistle Five (which is not reprinted at the head of that epistle, unlike the other titles). The phrase 'indiciall hint' would seem to mean 'indication', related to the term 'index'. Coppe again employs a pair of assonant terms 'infolded and unfolded' - infolded (enfolded) meaning included, and unfolded meaning explained. This repeats Coppe's description of the work as a collection or 'fardle' rather than a single unified piece, which perhaps reflects both its epistolary form and the different audiences - Mrs.T.P. and her fellow-believers, the Scholars of Oxford, the general reader - and different

²⁰⁵ I have already discussed the heading of Epistle III.

²⁰⁶ To be 'Godedd with God' was the ultimate aim of the Family of Love.

²⁰⁷ *C.R.W.: A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century*, (ed.) Nigel Smith, Junction Books, London, (1983). All further citations from *Some Sweet Sips* are taken from this edition.

tones, registers, discursive fields or voices which the text inhabits and employs.

The first of sixty points enumerated in the subsequent list of Contents has a resonance with the concerns and terminology of critical theory:

A call to arise out of Flesh into Spirit, out of Form into Power, out of Type into Truth, out of Signes into the thing signified; and that call Sparkles throughout these Papers.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.43)

This transcendent urge is bound up with Coppe's impatience with all aspects of formalism. The early texts, *Some Sweet Sips* and the introduction to Richard Coppin's *Divine Teachings* (also 1649) make efforts to find forms suitable to their purpose²⁰⁸, whereas *A Fiery Flying Roll* seems almost an attack on structure, bursting the boundaries of any genre, a riotous hubbub of insurrectionary voices. The four binary pairs of polar opposites Coppe sets up here; Flesh/Spirit, Form/Power, Type/Truth and Sign/(the thing) Signified are discussed below²⁰⁹. As a group they point to a general opposition between appearance and essence which is also expressed in the widespread Puritan dichotomies of Husk/Grain and History/Mystery (and 'within/without' in the body of the text). Coppe means that there is an 'inside' to both word and world which animates, precedes and makes meaningful the external surfaces visible to us. It is a central point of Protestant, indeed religious thought in general. Not only does essence inhabit and animate the visible, but it ultimately transcends it. Coppe groups Flesh, Form, Type and Sign as human and earthly, Spirit, Power, Truth and Signified as Divine and transcendent. Coppe's work as a whole is described in these two initial and introductory pages, by the Biblical citation 'The Lord is my strength and Song' on the title-page and this first point of the contents. His work is consistently a call to

²⁰⁸ Coppe's introduction to Richard Coppin's *Divine Teachings* is so burdened by marginalia that it resembles a series of columns, for example, as though trying to make a number of different but related points simultaneously.

²⁰⁹ See Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, Ch.6, 'Chambers of Imagery' for a discussion of these and other figures of radical religious discourse.

arise out of flesh into spirit, a struggle to escape form and achieve prophetic power, to force signs to reveal their transcendent and inexpressible signified.

Flesh/Spirit has a clear Biblical basis and is unexceptionable in Christian theology, which stresses the dangers of 'the Flesh' and the importance of the Spirit. Coppe's own attitude to the flesh was to be portrayed by a slew of pamphleteers as profoundly heterodox, for example, the anonymous *The Routing of the Ranters* (London, 1650) asserts that Coppe 'commonly lay in bed with two women at a time', a claim which Coppe specifically denies in the post-script to *A Remonstrance of the Sincere and Zealous Protestation* (London, 1651). Laurence Clarkson, however, in his autobiography *The Lost Sheep Found*, certainly equates fleshly well-being with Heaven and God's grace, and boasts of his sexual conquests, but there is little evidence of any close connection between these two 'Ranters' in either theological or social terms²¹⁰. Coppe's use of this dichotomy seems quite orthodox.

Form/Power is a more unusual pair. Coppe decries 'formalism' in religion at every opportunity, seeing it as a cloak for hypocrisy, and his distrust of formalism, form, and the formalities extends to embrace not only ritual observances in religion, but formal education (which Coppe abandoned before completing his degree) and 'form' in its organisational sense in his writing. Coppe's struggle with the expression or form of his message is indicated in the excessive detail of the Contents of *Some Sweet Sips*.

'Type' is a reference to a common method of Biblical interpretation in the period (and before), which used figures and situations in the Bible as references to later or contemporary characters and events. In its extreme form²¹¹ the historical Christ is considered merely an example of

²¹⁰ Laurence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found*, (London, 1660), excerpt in Nigel Smith, (ed.), *C.R.W.*, pp.176-186.

²¹¹ As criticised by John Tickell in *The Bottomles Pit Smoaking in Familisme* (Oxford, 1651) and introduced as a specific point for refutation in *Copp's Return*.

regenerate man, rather than the unique 'Son of God'. This doctrine of 'types' derives from Christian interpretation of the Old Testament²¹², which seeks to prove Christ to be the Messiah foretold in prophecy. The habit of referring the contemporary world to a Biblical analogue or model as an interpretative tool for understanding history and the present is clear in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which also promulgates the equally widespread and related myth of England's status as God's favoured nation. The interweaving of Biblical and contemporary worlds reaches perhaps its extreme point in the writings of James Nayler and other early Quaker prophets, but is also present in the Royalist propaganda of *Eikon Basilike*, in which the King is repeatedly associated with the Psalmist David, and implicitly at least with Christ.

Coppe's use of 'Sign' and 'thing Signified' resonates with literary-theoretical vocabulary derived from Saussure. Seventeenth-Century linguistics shows awareness of an inadequacy of language in desiring a 'universal', 'Adamic', pre-Babel language which would close the gap between sign and signified²¹³. Coppe describes language as a 'dead letter', and he is to present a warning against arriving at a purely intellectual understanding of his text without appreciating its meaning from within, as in the second point of the Contents.²¹⁴

²¹² Joachim of Flores (Fiore) (1130-1200) was involved in the working out of typological parallels. For Joachim, see Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.232 & n.7; Marjorie Reeves and Warwick Gould, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1987); Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, SPCK, London, (1976).

²¹³ See Katz, op.cit.; Nicholas Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy*, Routledge, London, (1988), pp.87-88; Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England 1640-1785*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, (1977), esp. Ch.1.; M.M.Slaughter, *Universal Languages Schemes and Scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1982).

²¹⁴ While de Saussure's analysis of the linguistic sign employs the terms sign and signified, they have a different meaning for him, the sign consisting of two elements, the signifier and the signified, the first being the sound (or arrangement of letters representing the sound) and the latter the mental image associated with it. Neither of these is the actual object to which they refer, called the 'referent' (although Saussure seems unsure as to whether such a thing is actually necessary). In this sense, Coppe's sign and signified differ from Saussure's, and are less subtle, 'sign' being for Coppe a unitary symbol indicating an actual referent which he calls 'signified'. Perhaps this close relationship of terminology

EPISTLE ONE

A pre-ambular, and cautionall Hint to the Reader; concerning the ensuing Epistles here inserted.

Deare Friends,

Here'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.

But we bretheren are perswaded better things of you &c.

Her's some *Gold* and silver.

But that is none of mine.

The drosse I owne.

The fire will fall upon it, and consume it; yet I my selfe am saved: yet so, as by *Fire*.

Here is Scripture language throughout these lines: yet Book, Chapter, and Verse seldome quoted.

The *Father* would have it so; And I partly know his design in it; And here him secretly whispering in me the reason thereof.

Which I must (yet) burie in silence, till --

Here is a reede shaken with the winde, and the voice of one crying in the wilderness,

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, &c. The day of the Lord is at hand, is dawning to some.

Here is a great cry, and at mid-night too;

Behold, *The Bridegroom* commeth.

Here is a great pounding at the doors, -- But it is not I, but the voice of my *Beloved*, that knocketh, saying, Open to me, and let me come *In*.

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.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, pp.47-48)

Coppe's peculiarly personal address, his Biblical allusions, the pervasive sense of a coming revelation, the impression of both deferral and excess are all foregrounded here.

demonstrates more the persistence of terms and habits of thought derived from religious speculation within the scientific, rationalist culture of the Twentieth Century, rather than any close relationship in theories of language.

The passage above contains (mostly italicised) a sort of code which becomes clearer through the course of the text. It is a vocabulary fairly widespread among those known as 'Seekers' - a term even looser than those others employed in and of the period, used to denote those unaffiliated to any particular sect. John Saltmarsh, William Erbury, Isaac Pennington, George Foster and many others use a similar range of terms derived from Biblical interpretation. The *Unlearned* are those who do not know the indwelling God, *Gold* is truth, *The Bridegroom* the risen Christ, as is 'my Beloved', and *In* designates both those who know God and the dwelling-place of God within those who know him. Being saved 'by Fire' prefigures *A Fiery Flying Roll* and *Divine Fire-Works*. Coppe declares that 'The day of the Lord is at hand', bold enough in itself, but also that it '...is dawning to some.' This internalising of the Apocalypse pre-echoes Quaker theology, and the concomitant internalising of revolution is Coppe's decisive step into a radical subjectivism. There seems little doubt that Coppe expects this internal dawn to be replicated within each believer, perhaps each member of society. By the time he comes to write *A Fiery Flying Roll*, in 1650, he has lowered his expectations, and places greater stress on the retribution to be visited on those who stand against God's will.²¹⁵

The Type/Truth opposition allows of an ahistorical interpretation which would lead to us considering the difficulty of extracting 'truth', or even meaning, from 'type', or the printed word. A long metaphorical meditation is possible, and finds support in Coppe's own awareness of the bareness, the insufficiency of language - 'the mere letter of these letters'. Coppe's understanding of the phrase was probably of 'type' as prefiguration, or representation, and 'truth' as Spirit. Coppe's implication is that it is possible, even necessary, to achieve unity

²¹⁵ The dichotomy excluded from the Contents - Shadow/Substance - seems to pull in the opposite direction from Flesh/Spirit, as one would generally associate flesh with substance, but this shows Coppe's attitude to the body and the earthly, which are in a profound sense not real to him, the spirit being all. The contradiction between his transcendent urge and his social concern is a central tension in Christian theology, and a source of considerable fission in Coppe's writing.

with the Spirit of God, who alone is truth, the transcendent truth that underlies and makes meaningful all representation.²¹⁶ The material world is 'shadow', a veil which conceals, or at best a symbol which represents that which is; the great 'I AM'.

Coppe offers a 'cautionall hint' to mere linguistic understanding. 'Arise, but rise not till the *Lord* awaken thee. I could wish he would doe it by himselfe, immediately: But if by these mediately. His will be done.' There is then a seemingly self-contradictory construction 'I would (by no means, neither can I) pull you out of Bed by head and shoulders.' The brackets provoke the feeling of contradiction, the negative part of the message, being enclosed within them, seems to be optional, and perhaps they would be better placed round the phrase 'neither can I'.

He extends the metaphorical 'Bed' beyond limits, producing a humorous visual image.

If through the heat of love, mixt with zeale,
and weaknesse (in these) thou shouldst start out
of thy bed naked, into the notion of these - I
should be very sorry for thee, Fearing thou
mightest be starved these cold winter nights.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.* p.48)

Point Two of the Contents covers this section, expanding on 'the notion of these', 'notion' being equivalent to the 'imaginings' of Quaker rhetoric, speculation without Divine warrant.

2 The danger of arising into the Notion of
Spirituals afore the Lord awaken a soul, and
saies, come up hither.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.* p.43)

So 'these' in the main body of the text are 'Spirituals', as glossed by the Contents. It would seem from this evidence that the Contents were written after the text, and combine an introductory function with that of explanation, glossing difficult passages and drawing out essential points. This seems an attempt to impose some sort of order on

²¹⁶ The Lacanian 'real'.
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inspiration, and may explain the excessive length and detail of the Contents as a whole. The Contents themselves fall prey to inspiration, however, and references in the text for points nine, and thirteen to twenty-four relate to the text of Epistle Five, which indicates that further reorganisation of the material took place after the Contents were composed, moving almost the whole of Epistle Five from a point somewhere around 'That Christ and they are not twaine, but one, is to them a riddle', (p.49 in *C.R.W.*), (near the end of Epistle One), to the end of the tract as a whole. This adds to the impression of barely-restrained chaos in Coppe's lavish excess, a function of the explosive message Coppe seeks to restrain with and retain in words. It has also, needless to say, created considerable confusion among critics; both Thomas Corns and Nicholas McDowell claim that the connection between contents and text is 'tenuous'²¹⁷.

Coppe next says that Christ in the Spirit may offend those who know only the 'outside'.

If thou shouldst arise into the Letter of these
Letters, before the Spirit of life enter thee,
Thou wouldst runne before the Lord, and out-
runne thyself, and runne upon a rock, For it is
set on purpose, as one, - And a stumbling-stone
to some, - even to those who know Christ after
the Flesh (only). But happy they, who are in the
Inside of them,
Nothing can harme them.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.* p.48)

Coppe makes fairly clear his concept of union with Christ.

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.

Some are abroad, and without: that is, are at a
distance from God, (in their own apprehensions)
and are Strangers to a powerfull and glorious
manifestation of their union with God. That
their being one in God, and God one in them;
that Christ and they are not twaine, but *one*, is
to them a Riddle.

²¹⁷ Thomas Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue*; Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered', p.189.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.* p.49)

The stress is consistently on direct experience of God.²¹⁸
'the enjoyment of a naked God *in them*, and of Christ *in them*, unclothed of *flesh* and *forme*' (*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.* p.49).

In the following section Coppe reinforces the personal tone of his address, and introduces a construction 'am, or would' which is repeated with greater insistence in *Copp's Return*.

And so I must have done with this Point, and
with the Epistle too. Only I must let you know,
that I long to be utterly undone, and that the
pride of my *fleshly* glory is stained : and that
I, either am, or would be nothing, and see the
Lord all, in all, in me. I am, or would be
nothing. But by the grace of God

I am what I am
and what I am
in I am
that I am.
So I am
in the Spirit

	\		/
<i>The Kings and the Queenes,</i>			
And the <i>Princely Proge-</i>			<i>Gods</i>
<i>nies, and the Lords, and</i>			
<i>the Bishops & the Priests,</i>			
and the <i>Presbyters, the</i>	\		/ <i>Christ</i>
<i>Pastors, Teachers, and</i>	/	in a	\
the <i>*Independents, and</i>		word	
the <i>*Anabaptists, and</i>			<i>the</i>
the <i>Seekers, and the Fa-</i>			<i>Saints</i>
<i>mily of Loves, and all in</i>			
<i>the Spirit;</i>	/		\

And yours; all of ye that are the Lords, by what names
or titles soever distinguished,
Yours -

²¹⁸ Coppe makes a variety of Biblical allusions, as he suggested in the first quotation from Ep.I. He refers to Christ's parable of the mustard-seed (reported in Matthew and Luke), to the Book of Revelations in writing of the trumpet that gives an uncertain sound, the Temple being full of smoke, and the plagues of the seven angels, and also a reference to the leaven hidden in three measures of meal (in Coppe's view, by 'Queen Wisdome', possibly a relative of Boehme's 'Sophia') which is derived from Luke 13.21., he quotes in full Habukkuk 2.3., and uses the story of Eli and Samuel from Samuel 3.1-15 (for which he provides a reference).

*The Key. *Christ was Re-baptised. - The Lord is
my King, and my Shepherd,
or Pastor, &c. - The Eternall God, whose I am,
is Independent, - &c.
(Some Sweet Sips, in C.R.W. p.49-50)

The beginning of this passage displays Coppe's typical reluctance to leave go of his pen. It then passes through an expression of self-abnegation which questions its own sincerity or depth and on into a complex, poetical section, concluding with all-inclusive valediction/dedication specifically identifying the various warring or opposed factions in the political and religious disputes which were coming very much to a head (and a beheading) at the time of writing. As Epistle Two opens with a similarly expansive dedication to all parties in and beyond these disputes I shall consider them together below, and return to the poetical section based on the repetition of 'I am'. McDowell makes some play of Coppe's use of 'Ramist' long brackets. Such typographical and visual echoes are significant, but Coppe is not here being parodic: he uses these brackets as the Ramist tradition would wish, to group together and organise his terms in relation to one another. This seems an instance of Coppe making use of his education rather than attacking it, although, as McDowell says (p.196), Coppe uses the long brackets to unite, rather than divide his terms.

'But by the Grace of God I am what I am,' a self-referential, tautological statement, of an obviousness reminiscent of Popeye, but also of Jehovah's announcement of self-identity to Moses 'I am that I am' (King James', Exodus 3.14). The phrase recurs in 1 Corinthians 15.10., the Geneva edition's text running: 'But by the grace of God, I am that I am: and his grace which is in me, was not in vaine: but I laboured more abundantly then they all: yet not I, but the grace of God with me.' This is strikingly Coppeian in its simultaneous identification with God and attempt to distinguish between God and self.

'I am what I am' indicates an inescapable self-identification, which Coppe nevertheless throws into doubt

by his identification with the God within. He then implies self-acceptance, and an acceptance of the will of God with 'and what I am *in I am, that I am.*' The crux of this passage lies in the definition of the 'I am' within '*in I am*', which might be best interpreted as the self-naming God, the being without cause or origin. If so, the meaning uncoils thus: and what I am in God, that is what I am essentially. This re-iterates idea of union with the 'naked God in them'. The full-stop at this point allows us to consider the next phrase 'So I am in the Spirit' as the beginning of the valedictory passage, which thus reads 'So I am in the Spirit The Kings.....And yours, all of ye that are the Lords, by what names or titles soever distinguished.' which makes clear sense. Coppe's columnar layout implies that these persons and religious and political groups are subsumed within the unity of God, Christ and the Saints. The textual gloss Coppe gives relates each grouping or individual as best it can to a divine rather than human referent - 'The Lord is my King, and my...pastor...The Eternal God...is Independent,' translating individual divisions into Divine unity.

EPISTLE TWO

Epistle Two is divided into five chapters, and described as 'An Epistolar-Preparatory'. Before the ecstatic poetry of Chapter One there is an introductory section addressed to the warring parties on the political and religious battlefields of 1648. The closing passage of Epistle one names 'The kings and Queenes, And the Princely Progenies, and the Lords, and the Bishops and the Priests, and the Presbyters, the Pastors, Teachers, and the Independents, and the Anabaptists, and the seekers, and the Family of Loves' which seems all-inclusive enough. However, the immediately succeeding dedication to Epistle Two, Chapter One, is more specific both politically and geographically as well as more exotically far-reaching.

To all the Kings party in *England*, and beyond sea; and to all that Treat with the King: and to all the Saints in *the upper and lower House*; and to all the *Strangers* (Protestants,

Presbyterians, Brownists, Anabaptists, Sectaries, &c.. so called by Babels builders, whose language is confounded). To all the Strangers scattered throughout *Pontus, Asia, &c.* And to all the Saints in *Rome, New-England, Amsterdam, London*, especially *Hook-Norton*, & thereabouts in *Oxfordshire*, and at *Esnill, Warwick, Coventry*, & thereabouts in *Warwickshire*. And to all the Saints, (of all sizes, statures, ages, and complexions, kindreds, nations, languages, fellowships, and *Families*, in all the Earth.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.51)

The passage ends in an unconcluded parenthesis which seems to allow the possibility of including everywhere and everyone. Significant lexical choices include 'Strangers', 'Saints', and 'Babels Builders'. 'Strangers' forms a recurrent motif for Coppe in the course of *Some Sweet Sips*; he often alludes to the Pauline admonition to entertain strangers, thereby 'entertaining Angels unawares' (Hebrews, 13.2,).²¹⁹ Coppe's association of strangers and angels indicates his feeling for strangeness - for his own 'almost unheard of' words and deeds in 1649/50 for example, recounted in *A Fiery Flying Roll*; for outcasts such as Maul of Deddington and the prisoners of Newgate. Coppe's 'strangers' are those who behave in or follow strange new ways, including those who are called 'Sectaries' by their critics²²⁰. These critics, the representatives of an outmoded authority, Coppe describes as 'Babels builders, whose language is confounded', using this Biblical 'type' as an allegorical criticism encompassing human pride and divine judgement. That their language 'is' rather than 'was' confounded brings the contemporary application to the fore. It is precisely those who speak disparagingly of 'Sectaries' who are 'Babels builders', and on whom divine judgement has now fallen, or is falling, rendering their words meaningless, a mere babble. Coppe suggests that criticism of the sects is ridiculous, there is no position of authority

²¹⁹ This is also mentioned in Coppe's brief 'Preface to John the Divines Divinity' (1648), his first published writing (in *C.R.W.*, p.41).

²²⁰ Both Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Dayes', and Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, relate Coppe's interest in 'strangers' to Victor Turner's theory of the 'liminal persona', as advanced in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine Publishing, Chicago, (1969), pp.11-

from which they can be judged, indeed any such criticism itself calls down Divine censure.

Coppe's use of the Babel image to criticise those who oppose the Sectaries is a direct reversal of the usual use of this trope in the Civil War years, when it was most usually employed by critics of the explosion of heterodox opinions in the political and religious fields. As Sharon Achinstein says 'The Royalist attacks on the press may be seen as criticisms of the entry of new voices into the political arena, and the likening of the press's activity to Babel was a way of opposing the notion that the people were an audience fit to participate in public debate at all.'²²¹ Coppe turns a regular complaint of the conservative elements on both sides of the conflict against those who habitually employ it.

The political aspects of Coppe's lists allow some attempt at assessing the time of composition, and elucidating the extent of Coppe's awareness of the political context in which he writes.

The first list includes Kings, Queens and 'Princely Progenies' as well as the Bishops and Lords, all institutions and individuals under threat from the victorious Parliament and army. The second list is more explicitly political, including the 'Kings party' both 'in England, and beyond sea' and to 'all that *Treat* with the King'. This may have a 'coded' meaning, however, with the italicisation of 'the' perhaps suggesting that the King is God, not any earthly Monarch, so those who 'treat' with him would be those who know God directly. Such an interpretation is reinforced by Epistle Five's reference to 'the *Kingdom* of our Father *David*.' (p.72). Nevertheless, the surface meaning

112. Coppe's own conception of this persona is part Holy Fool, and part being 'made a sign'.

²²¹ Sharon Achinstein, 'The Politics of Babel in the English Revolution', p.24, (in) *Pamphlet Wars*, (ed.) James Holstun, pp.14-44. This article deals with various uses of the trope of 'Babel' during the period, uses which Coppe's appropriation of it tends to undermine. In his second retraction *Coppe's Return* he reverses this use, turning the trope back on himself, and

is provocative, and the message is not disguised as policy would dictate. It does not worry Coppe that including all parties could only alienate some if not all of them. He goes on to include both houses of Parliament, yet on the sixth of December 1648 and over the succeeding few days the army carried out a purge of Parliament ('Pride's Purge') and dismissed the House of Lords.

That Coppe should include 'all the saints in Rome' - Rome being for many Protestants a synonym for Antichrist - is even more daring. Scarcely another Protestant would suggest that there were any Saints to be found in Rome. Pontus and Asia are also unlikely stops on Coppe's itinerary, indicating the Eastern Orthodox Church. Coppe may feel that even non-believers - 'heathen' - can be saved. He also names some places in Oxford and Warwickshire; 'Hook-Norton' and 'Esnill'²²², Warwick, Coventry'. The juxtaposition of the parochial and the exotic is one of Coppe's characteristic touches, a collision reminiscent of his tendency to bring the worlds of revolutionary England and the Biblical Middle-East into close relationship, the sort of incongruity that makes reading him a source of repeated surprise.

That Coppe writes to those who 'treat with the King' may indicate that this was written before Pride's Purge, when elements within Parliament were still determined on a negotiated settlement against the wishes of the radicalised New Model Army. Charles was still a figure of political significance even with his party split, some of it being 'beyond sea'. In all the parties Coppe enumerates he does not include the New Model Army, rapidly becoming the most important political force, superseding Parliament as the motive power in political developments. Joseph Salmon's tract *A Rout, A Rout*, (1649) deals explicitly with the Army's political role²²³.

by extension on Sectaries in general. See 'Retraction and Retrenchment', below, pp.168-194.

²²² 'Esnill' is most likely to be a truncated version of Easenhall, a settlement between Coventry and Rugby.

²²³ In *C.R.W.*, pp.189-200.

Coppe's lists of 'Sectaries' or 'Strangers' include the Presbyterians, a party on the right of the Revolutionary spectrum with strong support in London²²⁴ and a powerful sense of discipline and organisation. It was principally Presbyterians that the army excluded or sequestered from the Long Parliament in 'Prides Purge'. The Presbyterians opposed both Bishops and Levellers, and were at various stages willing to come to terms with the King. Coppe is therefore notably even-handed and ecumenical in his inclusivity, but, as with his political juxtapositioning, the inclusion of both Bishops and Presbyters in list one, and of Presbyterians and at least Anabaptists in list two suggests an unrealistic, or otherworldly assessment of the bitter differences involved. Coppe believes that all such 'formal' differences are 'worldly' and to be over-ridden by the emergence of the risen Christ within each. In this, history shows him to have been over-optimistic.

Coppe's list of 'Strangers' starts with 'Protestants', a very general term indeed, encompassing the majority of both sides in the bitter Civil Wars.²²⁵ The dedication as a whole concludes with a list suggesting the widest imaginable catchment area for salvation, a universalist position more extreme than even Pelagianism. Coppe's italicised reference to 'Families' (as Smith suggests, *C.R.W.* p.51, n.6) may not actually refer to the 'Family of Love', as that shadowy sect cannot definitely be affirmed to have constituted an organised group at this time. However, Coppe explicitly includes the 'Family of Loves' in his first list with Independents, Anabaptists and Seekers. John Tickell's anti-Ranter tract *The Bottomles Pit Smoaking in Familisme* criticises Coppe as a Familist, although we know him as a Ranter. Clearly, such nomenclature was uncertain in application and under continuous review, several of the names being little more than terms of abuse ('Ranter', for

²²⁴ Brian Manning, *1649: The Crisis of the English Revolution*, Bookmarks, London, (1992), p.38-39. That Coppe himself was brought up as a Presbyterian we can assume from his association with Thomas Dugard and Ralph Button.

²²⁵ Walwyn uses this term to describe those who remain within their Parish congregations.

example, or 'Puritan' under Archbishop Laud) or derisive nicknames, such as 'Quakers'. The proliferation of descriptions of such new and heretical sects by such writers as Thomas Edwardes indicates something of the confusion and anxiety the apparent expansion of Sectarian activity was creating among those who considered themselves orthodox²²⁶.

Coppe concludes his dedication to Epistle Two with a line describing what follows as '*what the Spirit saith*', firmly connecting his authorial voice with the voice of God. This voice addresses the reader in an ecstatic prosody reminiscent of the *Song of Solomon*, long glossed by Christian interpreters as describing Christ's love for his Church, a tortuous piece of ahistorical mystification which completely ignores the original's striking sensuality. Coppe's own interpretation has 'the Day star' or Christ appealing to his beloved, the individual soul, the 'deare hearts' of the address²²⁷.

Deare hearts ! Where are you, can you tell ?
Ho ! where be you, ho ? are you *within* ?
what, no body at *home* ? Where are you ? What
are you ?
Are you asleepe ? for shame rise, its break
aday, the *day* breaks, the *Shadows* flie away,
the *dawning* of the *day* woes you to arise, and
let him *into* your hearts.

It is the voyce of my beloved that knocketh,
saying, Open to me my *Sister*, my *love*, my *dove*,
for my head is filled with dew, and my locks
with the drops of night. The *day* spring from on
high would faine *visit* you, as well as old
Zachary. Would faine visit you, who sit in

²²⁶ Thomas Edwardes, *Gangraena*, (1646-1648). J.C.Davis uses such confusions to throw doubt on the existence of the Ranters in *Fear, Myth and History*, and while I concur that there is little likelihood of the Ranters ever having constituted an organised Church in any sense, it is nevertheless undeniable that a group of preachers and writers existed who were called Ranters by their contemporaries, and who had some wider, if loose, following of fellow believers. A group of writers, a literary grouping, is not required to have a wide social following, and it is futile to try to define the limits of a literary movement, which is arguably either a convenient fiction for literary historians or a piece of self-publicity by writers. It is as a literary grouping that I consider the Ranters, albeit a stylistically diverse grouping, and I see no reason to doubt their existence in this light.

²²⁷ The image of the day star or morning star occurs in the writings of 'seekers' John Saltmarsh and William Erbury. It derives from Rev.22.16, where it is used as a metaphor for the risen Christ.

darkness, and the shadow of death, as well as those who live in the *Hill country*.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, pp.51-52)

The apparent meaninglessness of the rhetorical questions coupled with their insistence forces the reader to look beyond the literal and search for a hidden meaning 'within'. The repetitions are a further hint of Coppe's metaphorical use of language, with images of day-break and rising indicating a spiritual awakening²²⁸. Coppe performs a typical act of ventriloquism at the outset of the second paragraph, reinforcing his identification with the voice of the Spirit. 'I am *risen indeed*, rise up my love' '- I am *risen indeed*; I (*the day star*) would faine arise in your hearts and shine there.' (p.52) The intensity of the repetitions and refigurings is increased by the suggestion of sexual yearning in the choice of the terms 'rise/arise/risen' 'open' 'beloved, love, dove, fair one', an ecstatic quality which projects an excess, a spilling over of emotion. Coppe then moves into a passage of prophecy, foretelling a 'great darkness' and a succeeding era of justice and plenty, the predictions being drawn from Isaiah.

Coppe then calls upon the 'gates' to 'lift up their heads' in an uncomfortable yoking of metaphors, before passing on to a concluding paragraph which holds the first sign that the arising of the Spirit might not be entirely peaceful.

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.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.52)

This passage is reminiscent in its imagery of John Donne's famous devotional poem known as 'Batter my Heart', in which

²²⁸ The reference to 'old Zachary' is to Luke 1.5-24., where the birth of John the Baptist to Elisabeth, the barren wife of the aged priest Zacharias, is foretold by the angel Gabriel.

Donne enunciates the position of the recalcitrant heart²²⁹. Coppe's adopted position is that of a third party warning the recalcitrant heart of an imminent battering.²³⁰

Chapter Two is described as 'A *Prayer of [my father is help] upon Siginoth.*' Coppe includes a section of the Lord's Prayer, and invokes the Lord with a seemingly unlikely combination of images prefiguring the Apocalyptic vision of *A Fiery Flying Roll*.

O day of the Lord come, as a thiefe in the
night, suddenly, and unexpectedly, and in the
night too, that they might not help themselves.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.53)

Coppe's ecstatic repetitions here shade into incoherence, the temporal incongruities (themselves derived from 2 Pet.3.10., a text to which Coppe will return) being too great, yet producing a sense of urgency, and of invocation.

Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, these long dark
nights, come in the night.
Give word to the *Moone*, that it may be turned
into bloud, and be as black as an hairecloath.
Then fall upon them in the dark night, and
plunder them of all flesh and *Forme*;
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.43)

The final paragraph of the prayer threatens a divine and presumably spiritual violence.

O consuming *Fire* ! O God our joy ! fall upon
them in the night, and burne down *their* houses
made with hands, that they may live in a house
made *without hands*, for ever and ever, Amen.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.53)

²²⁹ John Donne, *Divine Meditations, Number Fourteen*, (in) *The Complete English Poems*, (ed.) A.J.Smith, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1976), pp.314-315.

²³⁰ Just before the last passage cited, Coppe introduces the term 'Selah'. It is a term without apparent meaning, but is glossed thus by Smith (*C.R.W.* p.268 n.8) 'Occurs frequently at the end of verses in the Psalter. It was supposed to be a musical or liturgical direction, perhaps indicating a pause or rest.' Selah is a frequent interjection in the Psalms. Smith goes on to note that 'Seulah' occurs in Habukkuk 3.2. In the King James Version it is 'Selah' throughout Habukkuk 3. Coppe has already cited Habukkuk in Epistle I, where he quotes Hab.2.3. in full, and at the outset of Chapter Two he revisits the late Prophet, employing the phrase 'A prayer of [my Father is help] upon Siginoth', which is a direct reference to Hab.3.1. Coppe's prayer does not resemble Habukkuk's in the least however, Habukkuk concentrating on the effect of God's majesty upon the waters, whereas Coppe appeals to God to bring spiritual unity. 'Let them be joynd to the Lord, that they may be one Spirit.' The plea contains a threat.

Coppe's invocation of the Divine Napalm has eminent Scriptural authority.²³¹

Chapter Three returns to the imagery of the Song of Solomon, and calls for a spiritual awakening.

Awake awake, thou that sleepest in security, in
the cradles of carnality. Arise from the dead.
From the *Dead*.
From the *Forme* thou sittest on, it is a dead
Forme.
From the *dead*. From *flesh*, flesh is crucified.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.54)

Coppe is explicit that party divisions must be overcome by the unity of the spirit. In this he shares with many a desire for reconciliation and an end to conflict, but Coppe believes this can only be achieved through external intervention. I believe Coppe intends the play on 'party' and 'party-coloured' which he makes repeatedly here.

Thus saith the Lord, Mine heritage is unto me as
a speckled, or party-coloured bird, but it shall
be of one colour, and my people of one
complexion; all of them.

They shall not walk after the *flesh*, but in the
Spirit, where they shall be united, and as a
speckled bird no longer.

They shall all come in the *unity of the faith*,
and be party-coloured no longer.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.54)

The reference to the 'speckled bird' is from Jeremiah 12.9, but Coppe introduces the term 'party-coloured'²³². There is a strong intertextual involvement with Jeremiah 12 around this point²³³.

²³¹ The house 'built not with hands' is drawn from 2 Cor.5.1, and the 'thief in the night' from 1 Thess.5.2, as well as 2 Pet.3.10. Biblical references to fire are numerous, and it is to be regarded as an emblem of God's word, as in Jeremiah 23.29, and Acts 2.3, and also as an instrument of judgement, for example Gen.19.24, Ex.9.23, Lev.10, Num.11.1, 16.35, Amos 7.4, and Rev.8.8.

²³² 'Party-coloured' may derive from Wyclif, where it is used as a description of Joseph's coat.

²³³ For example, in Chapter Four Coppe uses the image of the vineyard tended by husbandmen to complain of the state of Nation and religion. He complains that such 'grounded men' persecute the 'Lords Servants'

Coppe advances a Biblical model for the difference between those who are 'the children of the bondwoman' and those who are, like Isaac son of Abraham, born of the 'freewoman'. He associates the freewoman with 'Jerusalem, which is above' (the heavenly model of a righteous community) and goes on to extend this into a further attack on 'forme'.

and the son of the *freewoman* is free indeed, and persecuted of all *flesh* and *forme*, (for *every *forme* is a persecutor) but the son of the *freewoman*, who is free, and very free too - is also free from persecuting any - so, and more then so, the son of the *freewoman* is a Libertine - even he who is of the *freewoman*, who is borne after the Spirit. And (that which is borne of the Spirit, is Spirit,) thats the heire, which is hissed at and hated. And thats the Israel of God, the seed of the Lord, that Spirit, which the whole seede of the flesh, *Ismael* (in the lump) and *forme* (in the bulk) would quench and kill.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.55)

This is both dense, and highly provocative in its association of election and 'Libertinism'. The asterisk at 'every forme is a persecutor' leads to a marginal note:

Experientia docet; and though one forme persecute another, yet they can joyn hand in hand to persecute the son of the freewoman, and *Herod* and *Pilat* can shake hands and joyn together in this, to persecute Christ, and can mutually oppose the Spirit; this I have seen, I have looked upon with mine eyes, and my hands have handled.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.55)

The last phrase is adapted from 1 John 1.1. Coppe advances the doctrine of the Free Spirit, that 'the son of the freewoman is free indeed' 'the son of the freewoman, ... is free, and very free too' 'the son of the freewoman is a Libertine'. It is difficult to be certain, in view of Coppe's habitual use of such terms, to know whether Coppe is asserting the 'Ranter' heresy that those possessed of the spirit could not sin, but the insinuation is present. He is not in the least shy of comparing the suffering of his contemporaries with the persecution of Christ. The whole of this section is powerfully reminiscent of James Nayler, both

in its exposition of the Two Seeds-Isaac/Ismael dichotomy (Nayler uses Cain and Abel as his exemplars) and in its Christological parallels.²³⁴

Coppe goes on to issue a stern warning against persecuting God's servants (i.e. himself):

Take heed of meddling with the *Heire*, Touch not the *Lords anointed*, do his Prophets no harme;
Touch not the apple of his eye, His Saints, that are caught up out of Self, Flesh, Forme and Type, into the Lord, Spirit, Power and Truth.....and have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with all Saints; yea, with one another *in the Spirit*.

For they are standing before the God of the earth, and if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, & devoureth their enemies; & if any man will hurt them, he must in this *manner* be *killed*.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.43)

Coppe glosses this as Rev.12., but it is Rev.11.5 which contains this threat. Coppe prophesies that God will recover his vineyard and cast out the husbandmen.

He will recover his Vineyard out of your hands, and what will you do in that day? (To *dig* I cannot, and to *beg* I am shamed) will be a hard story, a (*durus sermo*) a hard saying, who can beare it? I could wish it might not be fulfilled (if it might stand with the third Petition) - (*Thy will be done*) in the rigour of the Letter - (for the Letter kills) But in the Spirit, upon, and in you, and then you will be glad of it.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.43)

Coppe manages to have it both ways, simultaneously gloating over and sympathising with the fate of his opponents, whilst suggesting that they are hoist by their own petard (the letter kills). He claims that the visitation of the spirit

²³⁴ In asserting that 'every forme is a persecutor' Coppe enunciates a consistent truth of religious and revolutionary movements which is noted by Weber in relation to the Quaker movement in *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Coppe declares himself a consistent opponent of dogma. As Weber notes, the initial impetus of a revolutionary movement, its prophetic moment, is succeeded by a period of retrenchment and increased authoritarianism. The history of religion is often described in terms of a series of revelations which harden into dogma.

will reconcile the victims to their fate. The contents section covers this as '39'; 'A loving, and Patheticall admonition to the Husbandmen; their dismall, dolefull doome, and downfall foretold; with a word of consolation to them and a prayer for them in the close.' There is a splendid eruption of alliteration, 'dismall, dolefull doome and downfall'.

With a typical willingness to see Biblical precedent Coppe continues:

I wish you hugely well, though you have denied
the holy One, and the Just, - and desired a
murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the
Prince of Life. -
Yet brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye
did it.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.43)

He then addresses the question of Church rule. 'Thus saith the Lord....my people shall know no Arch-Bishop, Bishop &c. but my Self.' Many will agree whole-heartedly with him on this point who will not be willing to assent to his next: 'This you will believe and assent to (dear hearts at first dash;) But they shall know no Pastor (neither) *Teacher*, *Elder*, or *Presbyter*, but the Lord, that Spirit.' (*C.R.W.* p.57) Thus Coppe dismisses all forms of Church government. He goes on to associate the New Model Army and Fairfax with God. Jeremiah 12.12 runs - '...for the sword of the Lord shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.' Coppe's version is 'For the *Sword* of the *Lord Generall* - the Lord, that *Spirit* shall devour from one end of the *Land*, even to the *other* end of the *Land*, And no *flesh* shall have *Peace*.'²³⁵

²³⁵ Smith (*C.R.W.* p.268 n.11) feels Coppe's use of the term 'Lord Generall' is a joke at Cromwell's expense; 'Another pun, diminishing Fairfax and Cromwell in the sight of God.' I believe that there is a sense in which Coppe believes that the New Model Army is acting as the sword of God. Coppe's compares the N.M.A. and God, which is bound to 'diminish' the earthly part of the equation, but he does not adopt God's view ('the sight of God'). It seems rather that Coppe associates divine justice with the action of this earthly force, which tends to glorify the N.M.A. rather than diminish it. That Coppe had not included the N.M.A. in his lists of parties to the conflict covered earlier also may suggest that he considers them God's instrument rather than a merely earthly force. This is (arguably) strengthened by the description of this point which Coppe offers in the Contents (point 42). 'The knowing of men after the Flesh, and of Christ (himselfe) after the Flesh, out of date, and Christ in Spirit is comming in

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Chapter Five reiterates the call to 'wakefulness': 'shake off thy *filthy fleshly* garments; shake off Self; cast off thy carnall clouts, and put on thy beautiful garments. Awake, awake, and watch; Seeke yee *Seekers*, Seeke ye, Seeke ye the *Lord*, and *David* your *King*, your *King*; Seeke him in heaven.....(*He is not here, he is risen ---*)' (*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.56). 'Carnal clouts' is a nice phrase (clouts being clothes rather than blows), but Coppe offers no detailed instruction on how they may be cast off, or on how to 'shake off self', which clearly comes to the same thing. Coppe associates the King with the Biblical David, reinforcing the transcendence of the political which has been a consistent message²³⁶. The next passage employs the figure of Mary searching for Christ's body in the tomb as a 'type' representing those who seek god in the external world of 'formes'.

Seeke yee -- But, whom seeke ye ? What seeke ye? What ? -- crucified *flesh*, took down from a *Cross*, and intombed in the earth ? What ? the *body*, to anoint it with sweet spices, which you have bought, and brought with you to the grave, to that purpose ?
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.57)

This passage tends to diminish the importance (but does not deny the existence of) the physical, historical Christ, and the symbolism of the Cross. Coppe's message is that all flesh must be so crucified, and that Christ's resurrection is to be interiorised and repeated universally. Such internalisation of Biblical precedent is a crucial interpretative manoeuvre of the radical underground, crucial in that it transmutes Christ and the whole history of the Bible into a map of the psyche.

EPISTLE THREE

request, being the sword of the Lord Generall, is devouring from one end of the Land to the other :- And the point thereof, set at the very heart of Flesh, to let out its very heart bloud, and every drop thereof.' (*C.R.W.* p.45).

²³⁶ Royalist propagandists used this connection in a highly political way, however.

Epistle Three is another introduction or prefatory letter 'An Apologeticall, and additional word' addressed both to 'the Reader' and 'my Cronies, the Scholars of Oxford'²³⁷. In this Epistle Coppe explains to his erstwhile colleagues why he has abandoned the rigours of full-time education, the only means of entering either the Church or the Law. This audience influences Coppe's mode of expression, provoking the 'lunatic moode', but reinforcing the latinate, lawyerly tendency in Coppe's writing. It also influences Coppe's frame of reference. There is a parody of a grammar-book for example, and a good deal of matey humour amongst the impassioned transcendentalism²³⁸.

By 'Apologeticall' I think we can understand 'explanatory'. Coppe launches into his main point straight away, asserting the doctrines of direct revelation and the new dispensation.

GOD, who at Sundry times hath spoke to his people, in divers manners; hath spoken mostly, mediately, and muchly, by man formerly.

But now in these last dayes, he is speaking to his people more purely, gloriously, powerfully, and immediately (I say) and if so (as it is, must, and shall be so) then more powerfully and gloriously. More purely and immediately; for thus saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their Inward parts, and write it In their Hearts,

(Some Sweet Sips, in C.R.W., p.58)

The mumbling 'm's of the initial proposition give way to a passage built on the repetition of 'purely and immediately', a characterisation derived from the more comprehensive list 'purely, gloriously, powerfully, and immediately, and that variously, and strangely'. Even while seeking to stress the purity and force of the new revelation, Coppe feels impelled

²³⁷ 'Cronies', as Smith's note in C.R.W. informs us, is an exact term denoting fellow students, which Coppe uses some twenty-one years before the O.E.D.'s first record of it.

²³⁸ The 'Grammar' in question has been identified by Nicholas McDowell in 'A Ranter Reconsidered' as Lily's, known as the *King's Grammar*, *Lily's Grammar*, or the *Authorized Grammar*. According to McDowell, 'designed by William Lily and John Colet to be the key-stone of the humanist education programme, this text was decreed the standard Latin grammar by Henry VIII in 1540', pp.182-183. The status of Lily's Grammar is emphasised by McDowell, he states that it 'was an aspect of the formal apparatus of the Church, being bound with extracts from the Book of Common Prayer.', p.186.

to dispel any notion that there might be only one, dogmatic orthodoxy at work by adding 'variously' and 'strangely' to an otherwise rhythmical list. Coppe seems careful to resist Norman Cohn's conclusion that sectarian religious groupings tend towards fascism: Coppe, Nayler and others of the radical milieu are not authoritarian, they are Christian anarchists²³⁹. As Coppe says, 'All Formes are persecutors, but the spirit is free from persecuting any'. Coppe continues Biblical citations with a continual stress on direct revelation, including Isaiah, but concentrating on the Gospels (John 2.20-27, 6.45) and the apocryphal Gal. 1.12-17.

Coppe runs together Christ's initiation of his disciples 'though I have known men after the flesh' with the Psalmist's famous invocation of the peace of God 'The Lord is my shepherd' (Ps.23) to produce the sensation of an achieved revelation. The 'hortatory' style, with its reiteration of familiar Biblical tropes, allows the expression of incoherent emotion in safely recognisable forms. Coppe also employs David's description of miraculous bounty from Ps.23, the setting of a table in the wilderness, which he again takes as an image of direct revelation, coupling it with a passage reinforcing his interpretation of Biblical precedent as foretelling inward and spiritual developments.

*He hath prepared a Table in the wildernesse.
This hath been fulfilled in a more literall,
external way formerly;
Is NOW fulfilling in a spirituall, glorious, and
Inward way.
He prepares a Table, and disheth out dainties to
us Himselfe Teaches us Himselfe, Leads us
Himselfe.*

(Some Sweet Sips, in C.R.W., p.59)

and again;

*For everlasting wisdom is doing over those
things in Spirit, power and glory (more
invisible to an externall eye) In Us :
which were in a more literall, externall, and
visible way done to, and for his people
formerly.*

²³⁹ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.59)

In between these sections Coppe continues to quote the Psalms, but also the Latin satirist Juvenal (*Satires* Six, 223) 'Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas'. Coppe renders this as 'Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas' which translates as 'Thus I wish, thus I command, the wish stands for the command'.²⁴⁰

In conclusion, Coppe returns to the notion of entertaining strangers, first using the pillar of fire which guided the Israelites as an example of the strange: 'even this *Stranger, This New Light, this Strange Light;*' (p.60), and then saying that those who have been guided by 'this new light' (or direct revelation) 'dare not be forgetfull of entertaining *Strangers*: because in so doing, they have entertained *Angels* unawares.'²⁴¹

Chapter Two is described as 'Being a Christmas Caroll, or an Anthem, sung to the Organs in Christ-Church at the famous University of --- the melody whereof was made in the heart, and heard in a corner of [my Father is of help] a late converted JEW.' Mikhael Bakhtin discusses the medieval tradition of 'Christmas Laughter', (*risus natalis*), among the novices of the religious orders, which 'expressed itself...in songs...a huge store of Christmas carols existed in which reverent nativity hymns were interwoven with folk motifs... Parodic-travestyng ridicule of the old often became dominant in these songs, especially in France, where the "Noel", or Christmas carol, became one of the most popular

²⁴⁰ As Smith suggests (*C.R.W.* p.59, n.13) Coppe hijacks Juvenal to stand in for the voice of God, a fact which outrages his most considered contemporary critic John Tickell in *The Bottomles Pit* (1651), since classical Latin satire is not a suitable vehicle for Christian doctrine.

²⁴¹ Robert Kenny makes much play of Coppe's use of the figure of the stranger in his article 'In These Last Dayes', relating it to the work of anthropologist Victor Turner (also cited in this connection by Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, p.90). There seems to me at least no need to resort to twentieth-century theoretical perspectives in this connection, except insofar as they are useful to us. They should not be thought to supersede or offer a superior explanation beyond Coppe's own understanding of his position. Coppe's Millenarianism is sufficient explanation for his 'liminality'.

generic sources for the revolutionary street song'²⁴² This is quite a striking parallel, and it is possible that Coppe may have been aware of the medieval Latin tradition of Christmas laughter, although this cannot be shown. Coppe's 'Caroll' does not seem particularly musical in style, but his self-association with ritual music in his introduction once again demonstrates his differences from Puritanism, despite his Presbyterian background, as music was one of the elements of 'Papist' religious practice to which many Puritans objected.

It is delightful that Coppe describes this melody as having been heard in a corner of himself. Coppe launches into a display of word-play in a punning, assonant introduction.

And it is neither Paradox, Hetrodox, Riddle, or ridiculous to good Schollars, who know the *Lord in deed*, (though perhaps they know never a letter in the Book) to affirm that God can speak, & gloriously preach to some through Carols, Anthems, Organs; yea all things else, &c. Through Fishers, Publicans, Tanners, Tent-makers, Leathern-aprons, as well as through University men, -- Long-gowns, Cloakes, or Cassocks; O *Strange* !

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.60)

According to Coppe, then, good scholars need not be able to read, but can receive God's message (teaching) through music, or indeed anything. Coppe also asserts that the unlearned (including 'Fishers', as with the Apostles) can preach as well as University men. Both groups are defined partly by dress, as if to imply the triviality of externally visible marks of status.

Coppe then adopts the voice of an interlocutor; 'But what will this babbling *Battologist*²⁴³ say ?', raising a point of criticism which might justly be applied to Coppe and a number of religious writers. Coppe's message of direct revelation is ceaselessly reiterated, and Quaker attacks on

²⁴² Mikhael Bakhtin, 'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', (in) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (trans.) M. Holquist and C. Emerson, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, (1981), p.72.

social hierarchy, the tithe system and hireling priests are a litany of repetition. Coppe describes Paul as 'the Athenians Babler', suggesting an equality with himself which is likely to offend the orthodox. Coppe's levity runs hand in hand with his awareness of God's immanence, a position which, while differing from pantheism, can sometimes resemble it in feeling and expression. Coppe quotes Paul to say 'the eternall Power and Godhead may be clearly seen by the things that are made;' but extends Paul's meaning by glossing it thus 'and the eternal God may be seene, felt, heard, and understood in the Book of the *Scriptures, alias Bible.*' (p.60).

Mine eare hast thou opened *indeed*, - may some say;
who heare the *Sword*, and him that sent it, even
the *Sword* of the *Spirit* preach plaine and
powerfull, quick and keene, sharp, short, and
sweete Sermons, through clouds and fire, fire
and water, heaven and earth, through light and
darkness, day and night.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.60)

Coppe calls on the reader to focus again with a parenthetical 'I say' before his briskly rhythmical account of the sermons of the sword of the spirit²⁴⁴. These natural sermons seem set in implicit contrast to the dusty rhetoric of the Academy, their elemental means of transmission a litany of divinely motivated natural religious symbols. It is in this chapter that Coppe gets closest to an appreciation of the world as God's storehouse reminiscent of his close contemporary Gerard Winstanley. The next paragraph continues this theme, with a Latin quotation - and translation - rubbing shoulders with a line from the Psalms. Coppe makes a mess of the Psalm (19.1) by duplicating the action of the heavens; 'For the heavens are telling declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork'. The King James version reads 'declare'. It is as though Coppe has written down 'are telling' and decided to replace it with the correct 'declare', but has failed to make this

²⁴³Smith informs us that this is 'bathologist', one who needlessly repeats himself. (*C.R.W.* p.60, n.14).

²⁴⁴ The sword that preaches must be the word of the Lord, perhaps the 'sharp sword of the Spirit' of Rev. 1.16/19.15, or the sword which Christ claims to send (Mat.10.34.), or most precisely the Pauline 'sword of the Spirit which is the word of God' (Eph.6.17.).

clear to the printer. More significant perhaps is the parenthetical Hebrew insertion after 'heavens', which is the same as that which he has given as his name.

Coppe breaks off and begins with a new address 'To the chief Musician, for the Organist of *Christ-Church*', imitating the form of the brief note at the head of each Psalm, usually 'to the Chief Musician'. The new section this introduces seems no more like a Christmas Carol, and continues to denigrate book-learning by comparison with direct revelation. The argument is somewhat obscured by its complex expression, but, in simple terms it comes to something like 'they are brave scholars that hear God in and through daily life, and through reading; but they are better scholars who need no book, seeing God everywhere.' The two classes of scholar are not distinct, however, except in their manner of reading. Coppe seems to stress that the better scholars can read God in the negative, as it were; 'on the backside, and outside', 'heeles upward', 'every word backwards', 'downwards and upwards', 'from right to left', 'as well in the Clouds, as in the Sun'.

This may be a hint of the Ranter doctrine of the *Light and Dark Sides of God*, as Jacob Bauthumley put it in 1650, a Manicheanism which itself supports the antimoralism Lawrence Clarkson at least ascribes to himself. Clarkson's *A Single Eye, All Light*, in comparison to Bauthumley's formulation, presents us with a pertinent question, whether moral positions are a matter of point of view, 'culturally relative' we might say nowadays, or absolute²⁴⁵. The hint of moral relativism is present in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, certainly, in its use of the royal motto 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'. It is a doctrine of Behmenism that God's pure energy constructs the phenomenal world through a series of emanations, which include negative, 'dark' energies. Behmenism includes the negative and the phenomenal within the spectrum of God, although not in the same way as

²⁴⁵ *A Single Eye All Light, no Darkness*, (1650) in C.R.W., pp.161-175.

Zoroastrianism or the ancient heresy of Catharism²⁴⁶. Ranters too tried to unify spiritual forces more often considered to be opposed and mutually antagonistic. Joseph Salmon uses something like a theory of emanations to explain the political events of the Civil War in his army pamphlet *A Rout, A Rout*²⁴⁷.

Coppe continues to address his former cronies, now with an edge of jovial contempt for their efforts.

Well, hie you, learne apace, when you have
learned all that your *Pedagogues* can teach you,
you shall go to Schole no longer, you shall be
(Sub ferula) under the *lash* no longer, but be
set to the *University* (of the universall
Assembly) and entred into *Christs Church*, (the
Church of the first born, which are written in
heaven)

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.61)

The 'Christs Church' pun is obvious, and Coppe aims to bring out the element of universal in University. He is also aware of the bibliographical distinction (which indicates a difference in respectability) between the Octavo format in which his own work is published (small pages designed to be sold cheaply) and the larger, more impressive and expensive Folio page size of a 'Church Bible'.

The next passage, which features another of Coppe's columnar layouts, is a parody of the sort of 'Primer' or grammar text-book to which Coppe has compared this work. Coppe constructs a narrative of revelation employing the seven 'moodes', 1) Lunatick, 2) Indicative, 3) Imparative, [sic] 4) Optative, 5) Potentiall, 6) Subjunct., and finally, 7) Infinitive. Coppe continues to stress estrangement and loss of self;

that men shall say you are not only in a Lunatick --- (1) \Moode
but quite *besides* your selves; you burne your Books, that |
is the ----- *Indicative* ----- (2) |
and when you are accounted fooles and mad men, and are |

²⁴⁶ For Boehme see Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.185-225; for Zoroastrianism, or Manicheanism, see R.I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*, pp.140-167; for Catharism, see Moore, *Origins*, pp.168-280.

²⁴⁷ Smith gives an account of emanation theory in *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.247.

besides yourselves (in good earnest) and your father and mother are troubled at you, grieve for you, and at length forsake you, then the Lord will take you up into himself, and say, Live in me, dwell in me, walk with me; there is the ----- *Imparative*, \ \ and you will sing an *Hebrew Song*, one of the Songs of *Sion*; the Lords Song, when you are lifted up, out of a | 3 | strange *Land* --- your selves, when you are | | non - entities, walk with God and are not, because the \ | Lord hath took you, then (I say) you will sing one of the / | songs of *Sion*, an *Hebrew Song*, and say (²⁴⁸) | | thou art my Father, my God, *Psal.* 89.26. Let my | | Father, my God dwell with me for ever and ever, Amen. | | Let him there dwell, that is still the ----- *Imparative*. / / And it must be so, For you are no more *twaine* but *one*, He is in the *Imparative Moode*, and so are you; For thus saith the Lord, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and -- *command ye Me*. And (*Utina, si, o, o, si, utinam.*) I would to God the \ people of God (*now*) knew their interest in God, and | *union in Him*, what they knew they were *one*, in the | Father, and in the Son, there is the ----- *Optative* (4) | *Moode*. Some may, can, might, should, would know it: (if they | could,) theres the ----- *Potentiall* (5) \ When the Father pleaseth,--there is the-- *Subjunct.* (6) / *Moode*. And by this time I am so far beside myself, as to add an | *Interjection* unto an *Adverb* in the *Optative* line (*now*) | *ha, ha, he*, -Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, | where we shall live to sing *Halelujah* to him, that is | the ----- *Infinitive* (7) /

(Some Sweet Sips, in C.R.W., pp.61-62)

Bakhtin also gives an account of the tradition of *risus paschalis*, in which

The medieval monastic pupil (and in later times the university student) ridiculed with a clear conscience during the festival everything that had been the subject of reverent studies during the course of the year - everything from the Sacred Writ to his school grammar. The Middle Ages produced a whole series of variants on the parodic-travestyng Latin grammar.²⁴⁹

Whether or not Coppe had come across such parodic grammars in the course of his studies he seems to make his own contribution to the genre here, and it is clear that the sort of parody in which Coppe engages here has a long tradition which is of specific relevance to his intended audience of 'cronies'.

The 'lunatick', which entails a degree of social ostracism, is only the beginning of this pilgrimage through grammar. The burning of the books is taken to be 'indicative', and

²⁴⁸ The Hebrew here Smith glosses as 'O Lord thou art my strength'. (C.R.W. n.16).

²⁴⁹ Mikhael Bakhtin, 'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', (in) *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp.72-73.

rejection by family precedes God's 'imparative' summons to 'Live in me'. Both parties, God and self, are linked by the 'imparative', and Coppe himself (with a declension of the participles of wishing) enters into the 'Optative' moode, stressing the unity of God and individual. After 'union in Him', the next word 'what' would better be replaced with 'that'. The optative is the 'wishing' mood. The 'Potentiall' is covered by 'may, can, might, should, would', and the Subjunctive by 'When the Father pleaseth'. Coppe then seems to notice a grammatical impropriety he had committed in his discussion of the optative, but he is unperturbed, laughs, and concludes by describing God as the 'Infinitive'. Nicholas McDowell examines this section closely in 'A Ranter Reconsidered', suggesting that 'Coppe declares his mock temerity in breaking Lily's rules' (p.185) ('And by this time I am so far beside myself...') but this is not in the optative line. I do not myself have a full explanation for this puzzling moment, but I do feel one may be possible. If it were grammatically improper to use the adverb 'now' in the optative mood, then the passage sees Coppe joyfully compound his error, adding an interjection of unconcerned or even mocking laughter. The impression Coppe then conveys, of noticing a previous grammatical impropriety and commenting on it in the course of its writing gives the passage a further paradoxical edge: the formal parody is also an improvisation; the text is permeated with errors which are nevertheless part of the lesson. This is a highly self-conscious text, Coppe's awareness of the textuality of his production is acute and startling. Smith says that 'the optative is still shown to be operating in the infinitive', but the infinitive is God, (not, I think, heaven, as McDowell would have it), and there would be no need for wishing after union with the divine²⁵⁰. McDowell goes on to say 'This spiritual declension becomes an incantatory prayer for universal conversion which expresses the sterility of formal education.' (p.184). This seems a partial misinterpretation, as, although the section ends with a part of the Lord's Prayer, it serves more as an autobiography or

²⁵⁰ Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.292.

predictive biography than an incantatory prayer. Coppe's parody adapts the structure of the Grammar to his own spiritual experiences, which he projects as the future of his readers²⁵¹.

Coppe then starts his farewells, which take some time, of course. He again associates himself with the Family of Love. 'O *infinite Love!* that Family he is of -- who is --- Sweet Schollers, Your Moody Servant, ----'

Coppe continues his valediction, but has more to say;

From *Christ-Church Colledge* ----- where the
Deane, his Tutor (who will be) (I meane, will be
known to be) Primate and Metropolitane of all
Christendome, and *Archbishop* of *All-*
hallows.....is teaching him his *Accidence*, a new
way, new, new, new;
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.62)

He then produces a latin tag: 'Et hoc accidit dum vile fuit' (and this happened, while it was of little worth), which arises again in *Divine Fire-Works*. Perhaps here it is intended to stress the circumstantial nature of his new learning as opposed to the orderly and cloistered instruction at Oxford. There then follows a passage on tenses in which Coppe suddenly engages in a startling shift of register.

But no more of this till I come to (*Doctrina magistri*) the learning of the *Master*, who is teaching me all the parts of Speech, and all the Case of Nounes, and all the Moodes and Tenses of Verbs. And there be five Tenses or Times: there is a Time to be merry (*To be merry in the Lord*) and that is the Present Tense with some, to others the Future.
There is a Tense or Time to Write, and a Time to give over. It is almost time for me to knock off here for the present; because I heare *Interjections* of Silence (as *an*, and such others) sounding in mine ears
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.62-63)

²⁵¹ McDowell's close reading of Epistle III, Chapter Two draws many parallels with Lily, not all of which are as striking. The parallel drawn with the conclusion of Chapter Two seems far from the 're-writing' of 'Lily's declared intention' which McDowell claims it to be. (McDowell, p.186/*C.R.W.*, pp.62-63.)

Coppe seems suddenly to tire of his grammatical parody and learned references, his Latin tags and grandiloquence of style. His declaration that 'there is a Time to be merry' is a reference to Ecclesiastes, and serves to reiterate Coppe's spiritual libertinism and his belief that all will come to share it. The phrases 'knock off' and 'give over' have a demotic flavour, clashing with the technical language of the previous passage, and with the context of Ecclesiastes. The 'interjections of silence (as an, and such others)' seem entirely mysterious, as is the thought of silence 'sounding in mine eares'. McDowell (who misquotes this passage) states that 'an' is designated as an interjection signifying silence by Lily, although why one should require an interjection signifying such a thing is not made clear. I do not think that Coppe 'pretends to be in a disputation with his 'cronies'' (p.186), and can find no evidence to support such an assertion. It is a remarkable passage, witty, daring, and surprising. Coppe continues, despite the interjections of silence, declaring all he has said 'to be sound and *Orthodox Divinity*'.

Strangers again return: 'Here are two sent to thee' presumably meaning the two remaining Epistles, and he pre-emptively their message: '*flesh* must die and be crucified, and the *Spirit* live and dwell in the Saints. Mans day is almost at an end; and the day of the Lord is at hand;.....and the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the loftiness of men laid low, and the *Lord alone* shall be exalted in that day.' (p.62) So Coppe promotes not only an early-modern decentring of the personality and soon early-modern gender confusion, but early-modern post-humanism as well.

This Epistle is dated December the twenty-fifth, 1648, after Pride's Purge, and very shortly before the Army interrupted another round of Parliamentary negotiations with the King by the expedient of seizing him (for the second time), preparing the way for his trial and execution. This was to be an event of profound symbolic significance, and could only heighten the Millennial fervour of Coppe and his fellow Radicals, who already believed themselves on the brink of a

new social order. That Coppe refers both to Christmas (not a festival approved of by Puritans, and one soon to be abolished) and to religious music in a positive way serves to distance him from the new orthodoxy of Puritan discourse. Coppe concludes his Epistle to the Schollars of Oxford 'From the land of *Canaan*, the land of *Liberty*.'

EPISTLE FOUR

Epistle Four is the long-promised 'Extract of an Epistle sent to A.C. from Mrs.T.P. (another late Converted *Jew*,) mediately occasioning the precedent Epistles of the last Letter' - the putative cause of the whole work. Mrs.T.P., whose identity has not been established, writes in a fairly convoluted style without the aid of Latin, including much Biblical reference. She tends to exalt the spiritual value of the mundane. She makes references to Coppe's elevated spiritual status, and to God's direct influence. Coppe is the 'Image of my *Father*' (p.64), who has 'the *Anoynting*; which sheweth you all things' (p.65). Despite this high degree of praise (which Coppe sees fit to print), and emphasising the egalitarian basis of the projected communion of Saints, Coppe is addressed as 'Deare Brother'. Coppe's publication of this missal, which Jerome Friedman describes as a 'fan letter' could be attributed to a desire to bolster his authority as a prophet²⁵². After all, to be consulted on such a manner in such terms indicates some popular belief that he is an authority. His self-conscious use of latin tags and other displays of learning comprise another such strategy²⁵³.

Mrs.T.P. is clearly aware of, but not restricted by, the traditional cultural assessment of women. 'What though we are weaker vessels, women &c. yet strength shall abound, and we shall mount up with wings as Eagles; we shall wake, and not be weary, run, and not faint; When the *Man Child Jesus*

²⁵² Jerome Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immorality, Anarchy*, p.81.

²⁵³ Milton also seeks to dissociate himself from the stereotype of the 'tub-preacher' by stylistic means, although probably more successfully than Coppe. McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered' p.182, and especially pp.187-189, sees Coppe's displays of learning as parodic of Daniel Featley and other critics of the sects, but he may just be showing off.

is brought forth *In Us.*' (p.64) Such sentiments would not be out of place in Anna Trapnel, and a number of female prophets were to emerge around Quakerism²⁵⁴. Mrs.T.P. greets Coppe with 'true love in the Spirit of one-nesse', says, at some length, that it would be nice to see him, affirms her direct experience of God 'now I believe, not for any ones word, but because I have seen, and tasted --' (p.64), and then comes to her vision.

'...of late the Father teacheth me by visions in the night.' (p.64) For Mrs.T.P., as well as a broad spectrum of contemporary thought influenced by the controlling God of Calvinist theology, or the theory of 'Providentialism', everything can be interrogated for a divine message. That dreams are a communication from the spirit world is accepted by many cultures throughout history, not least in the Old Testament²⁵⁵. Even today in the West dreams are given credence as messages from the unconscious mind, a modern repository for the numinous and otherworldly. Mrs.T.P.'s dream is recounted simply, and seems to embody a psychological truth which she interprets quite clearly. Her insight is close to Gerard Winstanley's conviction that the private ownership of land is the original sin, the cause of the fall.

I was in a place, where I saw all kinds of Beasts of the field; wilde, and tame together, and all kinds of creeping wormes, and all kinde of Fishes ---- in a pleasant river, where the water was exceeding cleere, ---not very deep-- but very pure---and no mud, or settling at the bottome, as ordinarily is in ponds or rivers. And all together, and my selfe with them; yea, we had so free a correspondence together, as I oft-times would take the wildest of them, and put them in my bosome, especially such (which afore) I had exceedingly feared, such that I would not have toucht, or come nigh: as the Snake, and Toade, &c.--And the wildest kinde, and strangest appearances as ever I saw in my

²⁵⁴ For Anna Trapnel, and the widespread outbreak of female prophecy in general, see Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, (1996).

²⁵⁵ See Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.73-103, for an account of the significances placed on dreams in this period.

life. At last I tooke one of the wildest, as a Tiger, or such like, and brought it in my bosome away, from all the rest, and put a Collar about him for mine owne, and when I had thus done it, it grew wilde againe, and strove to get from me, And I had great trouble about it. As first; because I had it so neare me, and yet it should strive to get away from me, but notwithstanding all my care it ran away.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.65)

This vision of Edenic innocence disturbed by the urge for ownership represented by the collar seems sufficiently interpreted by Mrs.T.P. herself, who 'is not altogether without teachings in it.'²⁵⁶ She stresses that any insight she has gained is not her own - it comes from God. 'And it was shewen me, that my having so free a commerce with all sorts of appearances, was my spirituall libertie -' The use of 'appearances' is interesting, suggesting that the Coppeian belief that form and flesh are mere containers for the spirit is firmly ingrained in Mrs.T.P. as well. Quite apart from Winstanley, the belief seems almost Buddhist. There is a more positive attitude towards the created world - somewhat in tension with Coppe's transcendentalism - after Mrs.T.P.'s Bunyanesque phrase 'There is another Scripture which hath much followed me' - Bunyan is frequently persecuted by verses of the Bible during the course of *Grace Abounding*, wherein they are ascribed almost a form of consciousness, seeming to act independently and of their own volition. As with Bunyan, Mrs.T.P. uses a construction which places the active and motive force with the text rather than the individual. The text in question is related as 'God beheld all things that he made, and loe, they were very good.' Mrs.T.P. then continues with her interpretation.

Now concerning my taking one of them from all the rest (as distinct,) and setting a collar about it -- this was my weaknesse, and here comes in all our bondage, and death, by appropriating of things to ourselves, and for our selves; for could I have been contented to have enjoyed this little, this one thing in the libertie of the Spirit----I had never been

²⁵⁶ Hawes sexualises Mrs.T.P.'s dream in what I take to be a Freudian manner: 'Her interpretation of this dream makes a critique of erotic exclusivity' (p.63). Dare I detect an instance of 'projection'?

brought to that tedious care in keeping, nor
that exceeding grieffe in loosing,---
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.65)

Mrs.T.P.'s reaction against private property - 'propriety' in seventeenth-century parlance - a term which embraces both ownership and the status of respectability which that confers - stands opposed to the self-righteous acquisitiveness which becomes the sole refuge of sectarian business families after the reinstatement of the Monarchy ends Millenarian optimism; the theory of possessive individualism advanced by C.E.B. MacPherson²⁵⁷. Ireton's defence of propriety in the Putney Debates with Leveller elements in the New Model Army stands diametrically opposed to the vision of equity which Diggers and Ranters proclaim. The central and most difficult truth which Mrs.T.P.'s interpretation isolates is that the truest form of love is non-possessive. Despite the apparent sufficiency of this interpretation, Mrs.T.P. urges Coppe to interpret further; 'If you can tell the interpretation of it, it might be of great use to the whole body.' 'The whole body' is an interesting phrase too, corporeal, but relating to the Church, the community of believers, individual and yet composed of many individuals. In conclusion of this, and as an introduction to Coppe's interpretation he produces one of his absurdly legalistic, latinate and convoluted constructions.

Here (next) follows the *Epistle Reponsory*, to the late precedent Letter of Mrs. *T.P.* sent to *A.C.*

Wherein, there is an interpretation of her Revelation (expressed in the Epistle immediately foregoing;) and an opening of her vision, As from the Lord, and that, as followeth.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.65)

'Reponsory' should read 'responsory', I think.

EPISTLE FIVE

²⁵⁷ C.E.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1962).

Epistle Five is the crux of *Some Sweet Sips*, the long-delayed interpretation of Mrs.T.P.'s vision. According to Coppe, he received her letter on the twelfth of November (he uses the strange phrase 'it came not into our Coast till the 12. of November' (p.66)). Coppe does not say when he is writing his response, but it is clear there has been some delay.

Coppe pays close attention to Mrs.T.P.'s choice of words at first, taking up her reference to 'Vessels'

I know you are a *Vessel* of the *Lords House*,
filled with heavenly liquor, and I see your
love, --- The *Fathers* love in the sweet returns
of your (I meane) his sweets to me. I love the
vessel well, but the *Wine* better, even that
Wine, which we are drinking *New* in the
Kingdome.--

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.66)

Coppe mentions 'the voyce of my *Beloved*' again before returning to the matter of vessels with a spirited defence of sexual equality.

Deare friend, why doest in thy letter say, (what
though we be weaker *Vessels*, women ? &c.) I know
that Male and Female are all one in *Christ*, and
they are all one to me. I had as live heare a
daughter, as a sonne prophesie. And I know, that
women, who *Stay at Home*, divide the spoyle ---

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.66)

Coppe's use of 'at home' is symbolic, as in Epistle One. He goes on to describe the behaviour of 'our younger brethren', who are 'abroad' and 'spending *Their Substance* in riotous living', who wish to feed upon 'Huskes'. However, Coppe believes that such formal worship is almost at an end: 'But ere long, no man shall *Give Them* unto them...' The result of this will be that they will be 'hastened *Home* to the *Inside*, heart, *Graine*.' Coppe's expression of this unity with God becomes a list which seems to tend increasingly towards the wilder reaches of religious thought, lending weight to the accusations of immorality that were to dog him in 1650.

To the finest wheate-flower, and the pure bloud
of the grape; To the fatted calfe, ring, shoes,
mirth, and Musicke, &c. which is the *Lords*
Supper indeed.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.66)

Although this has Biblical precedent in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.22/3), Coppe consistently stresses the carnival elements of the orthodox in contrast to the prevailing Puritanism of religious discourse.

Epistle Five is not really an interpretation of the vision²⁵⁸. What Coppe does is to take certain elements either mentioned or suggested by Mrs.T.P. - the bestiary, which Coppe treats in a manner prefiguring 1657's *Divine Fire-Works*; the river; childbirth; and relate them insistently to the imminent rule of Christ²⁵⁹. He spins and juggles these elements, constructing an ecstatic celebration and invocation of the free Spirit. God-fearing Calvinism it is not.

'I am your eccho' (p.66) Coppe says, and this is not inaccurate, as an echo can both amplify and distort the original signal. Coppe's account of the accession of Christ within employs metaphors of birth, of light, of daybreak, of liquid, and of crucifixion. The Biblical allusions are used entirely as metaphors for internal spiritual experience without regard to their original context. Coppe's urge for universality overwhelms his grammar on occasion. 'I protest, by your rejoyceing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (p.67) and such difficulties are further compounded by the difficulty of distinguishing between the spirit within and the self which announces it:

I dye daily, yet not I, but *Christ* -- in *Me*,
dying daily to all things below the living God.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.67)

²⁵⁸ James Holstun, 'Ranting at the New Historicism', (in), *English Literary Renaissance*, 19:2, (1989), p.220, and Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, p.72, both agree (where I do not) that Coppe 'generally does elaborate rather than merely dominate Mrs.T.P.'s interpretation.'

²⁵⁹ 'Coppe's interpretation of Mrs.T.P.'s dream is made in terms entirely different from the dream itself.' Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.100. Not so. Most of the *terms* Coppe uses do derive from the dream. The *interpretation* is another matter, as Smith says: 'Coppe has succeeded in imposing his own highly spiritualist exegesis.' p.101.

Coppe then turns to a series of Biblical metaphors based on foodstuffs and taste sensations, the huske/grain dichotomy taking up from form/power and type/truth to lead into this gustatory forum. The delicacies which the Lord provides include fine wheat flower, true bread, locusts, wild honey, the fat of kidneys, honey out of the rock, life honey and honeycomb. In a further imitation of the Psalmist, (as with Wyatt) Coppe begins a 'song'.

Awake Lute, awake Harpe, awake *Deborah*, awake,
it is a song, a song; a song of loves; one of
the *Songs of Sion*, the *Lords song*, I am not in a
strange land now, though in a strange posture,
almost *besides myself*---in the *Lord*---Do I now
walk with God, and *am not*? hath *God* took me? O
it is good to be *here*. Shall we build here a
Tabernacle? not *three*--but *one*--one for *thee*,
for *thee*, for *thee*, O God, my God, my song!
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.67)

The allusions to strangeness reinforce my earlier point about Coppe's own feelings about the strange. Were he a contemporary of ours, one might suggest that he is experiencing a fashionably post-modern fragmentation and decentring of his sense of self, but this decentring is an early-modern phenomenon. To be 'at home' is to have entered a different relationship with the phenomenal world, an appreciation, an understanding, a knowledge of its spiritual basis, and, paradoxically perhaps, this produces in the self a feeling of strangeness, decentring, being 'besides myself'. Coppe is therefore 'at home' and yet in a 'strange posture'. Coppe's ecstatic prosody courts incoherence with insistent repetitions; seven 'Gods', six 'songs' and four 'awakes' (these within seven words) stud the paragraph.

The next paragraph starts with an apparently paradoxical, even nonsensical statement which we can consider a misprint, the second 'here' should read 'there'. Coppe is a 'late converted Jew', yet his name is in Hebrew, and he describes formal worship as the 'outward.--the Gentiles Court'. It is therefore possible that Coppe now considers himself Jewish; that his conversion has been to Judaism rather than from it,

but this would run counter to the narrative of Christian mythography, which promises Christ's accession after the conversion of the Jews, (a project actively considered by both John Dury and the Quakers).

One day *here* is better than a thousand *here*,
here within, then a thousand *without*, in the
fine wheat flour; then a thousand in the *huske*
and *bran*, here in the *inward Court*, then a
thousand in the *outward*.--the *Gentiles Court*:
Here in the *Power*; then a thousand in the *Forme*:
Here in the *Spirit*, then a thousand in *Flesh*:
Here in the *Spirit*, Oh Spirit! O Spirit of
burning! O *consuming fire*! O God our joy!
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.67)²⁶⁰

When Coppe revisits his gustatory arena in the next paragraph the Spirit of burning has 'burnt up the bullock', leaving 'fat' and 'kidnies', as in Leviticus 3.4. He reaffirms Christ's rebirth, taking on the persona, or position, of the apostle Thomas momentarily, before claiming Christ's birth and rising from the tomb as simultaneous events internal to himself. Once again these are not (or not only) historical events, but metaphors for spiritual experience.

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! O living
Lord!

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.68)

Coppe exhibits further early-modern gender confusion here, undergoing a male pregnancy, which takes gender equality to an extreme.

Freedom 'here' includes freedom from work, either spiritual or physical, as it seems such a distinction can hardly be

²⁶⁰ Coppe's association of God with the spirit of burning is repeated forcefully in *Divine Fire-Works*. God as 'a consuming fire' derives from Heb.12.29. See also note 230, above. Coppe's interest in fire echoes John

sustained in this context. He describes a cultivation, milling and refining process which God enacts within the individual which includes plowing, sowing, reaping, winnowing and grinding, and concludes with 'makes meale of thee, *Searcheth* thee, till thou are the finest wheate flower,' (p.68). This results in a total breakdown of individual identity 'doth *all--in thee*, till thou art *all in Him*, (-I *in them*, and they *in me*, --that *they* may be *one in us*, --and I *in them*.) (p.68)

While we were in the land of Egypt, we did toile, moyle, work, and sweat, and groane &c. while we durst not minish ought from our bricks of our daily taske.--But here, like the Lords Lilly, thou toilest not--but growest in the land, the Lord. Here, thou labourest not, art entred into thy rest, ceasest from thy labour, as the Lord did from his. Here thou hast Wells, which thou diggedst not, houses which thou buildest not, Vineyards, and Olive yards which thou plantedst not, Corne that thou sowedst not, &c. All is given, freely given thee. Here thou has wine, and milke, and honey without mony, without price.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.68)

This passage seems to be a source for the Title-Page. While it may be spiritual metaphor, there is an answering physical dimension. This is no mere political revolution, however, but answers to all emotional needs, a truly Utopian vision, drawn from Isaiah Ch.61.

Here thou art clad with the garments of *Praise*, for the spirit of heavinesse; here is given to thee beauty for a hes, the oyle of joy for mourning. Here all *Teares* are *wiped away* from thine eyes; thou shalt not see evill any more. For thou art in the *Holy Land*, the *Holy Lord*, and the Lord thy *God* in the *midst* of *Thee*, who rejoyceth over thee with joy; and *joyeth in*, and over thee with *Singing*. Sing oh Daughter, the *Lord Sings In Thee*. Take a *Timbrell*, oh *Mirian!* the *Lord Danceth in Thee*. Oh *God My joy!* Be merry with all the *Heart*.

Drink off thy *Cup*, the *Cup of Salvation*, its the *Kings Health*,

Saltmarsh's *Sparkles of Glory: Or, Some Beams of the Morning Star* (1647), where he refers to a coming 'Fiery Tryall', p.189.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.69)²⁶¹

Each ill is matched by a magical opposite; garments of praise cure the spirit of heaviness, and Isaiah also explains the otherwise mysterious 'beauty for a hes', which should read 'beauty for ashes'. Coppe then continues the wine metaphor he has started in such a controversial way, with a toast to the King's health. Clearly, Coppe refers to God rather than Charles, but such a rhetorical expression displays Coppe's contempt for political divisions. This metaphor extends to a wine tasting: 'it is lively wine, liquor of life, it will make the lame man leap like a Hart, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak....good wine, the best.....', and even to vini- and viticulture: 'Not the vine of *Sodom*, and of the fields of *Gomorrah* whose grapes are grapes of gall, whose clusters are bitter, whose wine is the poyson of Dragons, and the cruell venom of *Aspes*.' (p.69). This passage also contains the title-page citation about clusters of grapes.

Coppe then switches track, his drinking having brought on a philosophical mood.

What is man?
Man is the *Woman*, and thou art the *Man*, the
Saints are thy *Spouse*, our *Maker* is our *Husband*;
We are no more *twaine*, but *One*. *Halelujah*.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.69)

This Hamlet-like enquiry becomes a further gender question, confirming his revaluation of gender roles²⁶². Coppe's next metaphor is the river, taking up an image from Mrs.T.P. In Coppe's view the river represents the '*Fountaine of life*, the *Living God*' and '*clear as Chrystall, Christ-all*'

We are (I say) in that *River*, and that *River* in
us, when we are *besides* our selves, undone,
nothing, and *Christ* all in all, in us

²⁶¹ There is a note in the Geneva Bible's text of the Psalms (Ps. LXVIII) which mentions Miriam, Deborah and Iudith singing 'after the victory'. She may also dance in from Ex. 16.20.

²⁶² In connection with Coppe and the question of gender, see Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, Chapter Two, 'A Huge Loud Voice: levelling and the gendered body politic', pp.50-76. Also Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: gender difference in literary discourse.', *Feminist Studies*, 13:1, (1987), pp.49-82.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.69)

Coppe now begins to consider the beasts, and Mrs.T.P.'s singling out of one. His interpretation is quite different, seeing the beasts in terms of warring internal, psychological impulses, which he describes as 'formes'. They are, perhaps, thought-forms, familiar ways of thinking, another hint of an understanding of cultural relativism in Coppe's world view. As Coppe states that 'all Formes are persecutors' this is not inconsistent. Coppe believes that conflict is caused by, is an effect of, Forms, or ways of seeing, perhaps objects of discourse, not Spirit, which is One. This leaves no room for an opposing, evil spirit, which the Quakers do acknowledge, with some enthusiasm. It is close to Jacob Bauthumley, and perhaps Jakob Boehme, but a vast distance from Calvinism, with its relentless emphasis on sin and the works of the Devil. Coppe directs the reader to Romans 8.19-24, which is concerned with the pain of existence, and the hope of resurrection of the body. It may be that Coppe seeks to suggest in the following passage that such a 'resurrection' has taken place, or is taking place, within the body of believers.

The enmity within, and without shall be slaine,-
--.....
Then shall the *shaddow* of *Separation* wholly flye
away,.....
First, Wolves and Lyons----*within*, Then Wolves
and Lions *without*.---
The Enmity, the *Serpent*, in all, which is
exceeding bad, shall be slaine.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.70)

'The Serpent' is not an external spiritual force, but a human psychological trait in this formulation.

Tygers, Dragons, Lions *in us* (for my soule hath long dwelt among *Lions*) shall give over roaring, ramping, ravening, devouring, shall *play* with the *Lamb*;

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.70)²⁶³

²⁶³ Coppe again prefigures *Divine Fire-Works* with the alliterative 'roaring, ramping, ravening' Lion, a phrase drawn from the Geneva Bible (1587) where it features in Psalm 22, verse 13, and is used again by Jeremiah, at 12.8. The word 'ramping' does not appear in the King James Edition, although it is in Coverdale. I take this as evidence that Coppe used the Geneva Bible as a reference. He also periodically makes use of words which appear only in Wyclif or Tyndale. As a scholar, he will have had access to different

The psychological aggression provoked by the warring of roaring, ramping, ravening thought-forms is to be overcome. Coppe's theology is almost a psychology. He relates the taming of Lions to 'Sampsons Riddle', seeing the new dispensation as a fulfilment of the riddle as prophecy. 'Out of the mouth of the Eater came sweet.' (p.70), and explains the passing away of these ravening forms in terms of the outgrowing of childish fears: 'Bugbeares frightened us, when we were children...'

Coppe then breaks off from his interpretation, expressing some doubts, with reference to Moses:

But perhaps I speak with a stammering tongue,
that may be confest; And I expect prejudiciall
Hearts, eares, and eyes from some;
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.70)

He's certainly not mistaken in that, but it is not that he doubts what he knows;

But rejoyce exceedingly that I know *the Fathers*
voyce, though I cannot yet speak plaine enough
after him, or write that smoothly, which is
written fairely in me, in this particular.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.70)

Coppe again reiterates the doubts Moses expressed during his encounter with Jehovah;

My poore, sweet, dearely beloved Brethren in the
Land of Aegypt, the *house of Bondage*, will say;
(*The Lord* hath not appeared to me--- Exod.4.1.)
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.70)

Then, again in the persona of Moses, he confesses:

Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither
heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy
servant, &c.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, pp.70-71)

Jehovah is rather irritable with Moses, but Coppe has no such difficulties. He revisits the River as fountain of life, explaining its shallowness by the suggestion that as yet they are only near the bank. Four thousand cubits from

Bibles and commentaries during his education, unlike the Quakers, who seem

the bank, it is deep enough to swim in, he says, emphasising the size of the river as he envisions it. 'Oh the *Depth*, *Breadth*, and *Length*, how unsearchable, &c.--' This is a repeated figure in Coppe's later writings, where he uses it to stress God's mystery²⁶⁴. Once again Coppe relates the experience of begoddedness to pleasure:

We shall ere long swimme in the River, the River
of Pleasures, for evermore, for evermore, Amen.
(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.71)

Coppe then addresses the issue which caused Mrs.T.P. so much distress, but he does not differentiate between 'formes', instead asserting that 'They are all *wilds*, and will *runne away*,'. Coppe treats the matter as though Mrs.T.P. had behaved similarly towards all beasts, and misses the Winstanleian reference to private ownership. Coppe is in dispute with all symbolic thinking. Just as Christ took on form and flesh, Coppe says, but is now at the right hand of God, all 'formes' will dissolve into 'substance' - God, and the '*corruptible* shall put on *incorruption*, this mortal shall put on immortality.....' (p.71)

Coppe then commences his peroration, engaging again with 2 Pet.3.10.²⁶⁵

O dear hearts! let us look for, and hasten to the coming of the *Day of God*, wherein the *Heavens* being on *fire* shall be *dissolved*, and the *Elements*, (*Rudiments*, *first principles*). (Imagine formall *Prayer*, formall *Baptism*, formall *Supper*---&c.) shall *melt away*, with fervent heate, *into God*; and all *Forms*, appearances, *Types*, *Signes*, *Shadows*, *Flesh*, do, and shall *melt away* (with fervent heate) into *power*, reallity, *Truth*, *the thing signified*, *Substance*, *Spirit*.

to use the King James Edition.

²⁶⁴ 'Unsearchable' is a very interesting word, suggesting that the object of enquiry is not only impossible to find, but impossible even to know how to seek. The only Biblical text I have found which employs it is Tyndale, where it is in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, Ch.3, 'Unto the least of all the sayntes that I should preach among the gentylys the unsearchable riches of Christ'.

²⁶⁵ 'But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.'

This is the *Day, the Lords Day, the Sabbath* of the *Lord thy God*, which we look for, and hasten too, and which (in a great measure) some are already entered into.---

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, pp.71-72)²⁶⁶

This last claim, that 'some are already entered into' the Lord's day is a further hint that some have already achieved union with God. Implicit within the doctrine of 'begoddedness', to use the Familist term, is the conquest of sin. Clement Hawes misinterprets this citation, claiming 'it demands nothing less than an over-coming of language itself, now seen in the Pauline terms of "types" and "shadows"'²⁶⁷. Coppe is explicit that at this juncture he is concerned with religious practices ('formall Prayer, formall Baptism'), not verbal expression. The choice of this citation weakens Hawes' argument, and is unnecessary - Coppe's impatience with linguistic expression is everywhere apparent.

His final interpretation of the collar incident suggests that it relates to the following of one form of religious observance or another, rather than the appropriation of part of the commonwealth.

Let us not therefore any longer single out any appearance, and appropriate it to ourselves; no -- not a *Paul*, an *Apollo*, or a *Cephas* &c.--all is yours, if you will not set a collar upon the neck of any - distinct - or beare it in your bosome, &c.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.72)

Coppe concludes with a warning:

Thy Kingdom is come
to some
----their joy:
But to others doome
It is come
---they cry.---

FINIS

²⁶⁶ There is evidence of further Joachite influence here, in the use of the term 'Sabbath of the Lord', which Joachim employs as denoting the fulfilment of his projected third dispensation, the rule of the Spirit.

²⁶⁷ Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, p.79.

(*Some Sweet Sips*, in *C.R.W.*, p.72)

When McDowell says 'There seems to be a deliberate subversion of the traditional structures of publishing religious polemic as an aspect of Coppe's wider parody of official, formalised expression'²⁶⁸ he does not, I think, go far enough: Coppe parodies and subverts the conventions of the printed word itself, as part of an attack on all Forms, formalism and formality. Certainly, however, Coppe's range of Biblical and Classical allusion serves to set him apart from the normal run of sectarian extremists, a fact McDowell feels Christopher Hill chose not to remark. McDowell further criticises Hill's suggestion that Coppe's style is 'an attempt to reproduce his pulpit style' on the indisputable grounds that it would be difficult to speak long brackets, or a parody of Lily's Grammar, or a text which is virtually in columns due to the weight of marginalia. However, these are not consistent features of Coppe's writing, and much of it does have a strikingly oral cadence, even an intimate tone. Smith mentions Coppe's habitual '&c' (etcetera) as being indicative of a common understanding between writer and reader. I find this breaking-off tends to take place when a Biblical reference is invoked²⁶⁹. In *A Fiery Flying Roll* it happens most frequently when God is speaking. I presume that God expects his audience to be able to complete the reference themselves. This method of both indicating and curtailing Biblical citations is fairly common, I have noticed it in several other writers, including the German Peasants Revolt leader Thomas Muntzer²⁷⁰. Coppe's work is

²⁶⁸ McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered', p.190.

²⁶⁹ McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered', p.198; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.336.

²⁷⁰ Thomas Muntzer, (1489-1525), born Stolberg, to a wealthy family. Sometimes considered an Anabaptist. Early follower of Luther, but turned against him and supported the Peasants' War in Thuringia. Captured in Battle of Frankenhausen, and executed. For 'etc.' see Thomas Muntzer, 'Sermon to the Princes', pp.257-273, (in), Reinhard P.Becker, (ed.), *German Humanism and Reformation*, The German Library, Vol.6, Continuum, New York, (1982), p.261, p.267 n.5. See also Andrew Bradstock, *Faith in the Revolution: The Political Theologies of Muntzer and Winstanley*, SPCK,

particularly marked by his switching of tone, register, and point of address. It would be wrong to argue from a few passages that Coppe's writing is not 'oral' in tone.

Perhaps his education also marked Coppe out to the authorities, as few other Ranters found themselves summoned before Parliament, and those that did, (Laurence Clarkson, for example), were neither imprisoned for so long, nor had their recantations supervised by Parliamentary appointees.

A FIERY FLYING ROLL

A *Fiery Flying Roll* (collected by Thomason on January the fourth 1650) is Coppe's most famous, not to say notorious work. An autobiographical anecdote from it is collected within the canonical Bible-paper of the Norton Anthology of English Literature²⁷¹, although (rather inappropriately) in a section dedicated to 'Voices of the War', and at least at first with inaccurate and misleading footnotes.

A *Fiery Flying Roll* caused what passed for a media sensation in 1650, generating outraged responses from other pamphleteers and from Parliament itself, which promptly ordered his arrest²⁷². It is more violent in its language than any of Coppe's other writings until 1657's *Divine Fire-Works*, but still retains some of the millennial optimism of *Some Sweet Sips*. A *Fiery Flying Roll* is frequently mentioned or cited by Christopher Hill, Nigel Smith, Clement Hawes, Thomas Corns and other commentators, and generally presumed to be Coppe's exemplary and characteristic work²⁷³. I do not entirely dissent from this opinion, but I have chosen to concentrate on some of Coppe's other writings in order to redress what has become a significant imbalance. A *Fiery Flying Roll* is worth a thesis in itself, but funding for such a project would probably be difficult to obtain. In my present more broadly based project I have been forced to forgo an examination of this challenging work, though it remains a significant point of reference for me.

²⁷¹ Volume One, Sixth and Seventh editions. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume One, Sixth Edition, (ed.) M.H.Abrams, W.W.Norton, New York, (1993), pp.1744-1748.

²⁷² General responses to the Ranter phenomenon include *The Ranters Ranting*, (London, 1650); *The Ranters Religion*, (London, 1650); *The Routing of the Ranters*, (London, 1650); Gilbert Roulston, *The Ranters Bible*, (London, 1650); *The Ranters Recantation*, London, 1650); John Tickell, *The Bottomles Pit Smoaking*, (Oxford, 1651); Samuel Shepherd, *The Joviall Crew*, (London, 1651). See J.C.Davis, *Fear*, Appendix, pp.156-203. Richard Farnsworth was to write against the Ranters in *The Ranters Principles and Deceits Discovered*, (1655).

²⁷³ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, esp. pp.210-213; Nigel Smith, *A Collection of Ranter Writings; Perfection Proclaimed*; Clement Hawes, *Mania*; Thomas Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue*.

Published early in 1650, but written late in 1649, *A Fiery Flying Roll* indicates an increasing impatience with those in positions of authority and wealth who have failed, despite the execution of the King, to replace what Winstanley characterised as 'Kingly Power' with a more equitable system. Indeed, despite the aspirations of Levellers and Diggers land speculators from the educated elite were amassing fortunes on the basis of the redistribution of Crown lands and the enclosure of the Commons²⁷⁴. The victory of the army over both King and Parliament had not brought economic or political benefit to the less privileged in society, and *A Fiery Flying Roll* alternates between expressing condemnation of those in power and sympathy for (and with) those at the margins of society.

In *A Fiery Flying Roll*, Coppe presents himself as an example of the power of the spirit to regenerate mankind, he is made 'a sign', as Prophets like Ezekiel were before him. He frequently regards his own actions with a degree of surprise, finding himself moved of the spirit to behave in extraordinary ways. *A Fiery Flying Roll* would seem from internal evidence to have been written on a visit to London (Coppe's presence in London is confirmed by Laurence Clarkson, *A Lost Sheep Found*)²⁷⁵, but Coppe had returned to the Midlands by the time Parliament became aware of it, as he was arrested in Warwick. *A Fiery Flying Roll* is reprinted in facsimile by Exeter University's 'The Rota', by Nigel Smith in *A Collection of Ranter Writings*, and by Andrew Hopton in *Selected Writings*.

²⁷⁴ The Leveller John Wildman among them. See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p.276, n.33; Maurice Ashley, *John Wildman: Plotter and Postmaster; a study of the English Republican Movement*, Cape, London, (1947), ch.6.

²⁷⁵ In *C.R.W.*, pp.80-116.

RETRACTION AND RETRENCHMENT

A REMONSTRANCE OF THE SINCERE AND ZEALOUS PROTESTATION,
COPP'S RETURN TO THE WAYS OF TRUTH.

Coppe's first attempt at softening the judgement of the authorities was published in 1651, but did not have the desired effect. Coppe's 'Protestation' is aimed at distancing himself from the 'Blasphemous and Execrable OPINIONS' outlawed by the Blasphemy Act of August Ninth 1650. The title-page defends the author as 'not...in the least guilty', in terms reminiscent of Walwyn's *A Manifestation* (1649), offering the alternative title '*...Innocence* (clouded with the name of *Transgression*) wrapt up in silence; But now (a little) peeping forth from under the thick and black clouds of Obloquie...'

Coppe denies accusations which he believes the Act by implication lays against him. In seeking to present himself as unjustly accused Coppe fails to strike the right note to appease his captors. In fact, Coppe is in a difficult position; being held without charge he cannot know what to defend himself against, and without examination or trial he has no forum in which to do so. Coppe's strategy of a published 'Remonstrance' follows the Leveller precedent of appealing (through an address to the authorities) to the public, although it is publication that got Coppe in trouble in the first place. Unlike Lilburne, (for example), Coppe makes no attempt to advance legal arguments in his defence, despite the fact that he is defending himself against the provisions of an act which was not law at the time of his arrest - a clear breach of Lilburne's beloved constitutional liberties. Coppe says he has been assured that the acts of May Tenth and August Ninth were passed because of him, and that a public repudiation of the doctrines there inscribed might expedite his release. The conduit for this information is not stated, but one likely candidate is Dr. John Pordage, a radical clergyman and Behmenist of no particular party or

affiliation, who is said to have appeared on Coppe's behalf 'before the Committee at Reading' before 1654²⁷⁶.

Coppe's tone throughout his introductory remarks is combative. He describes his 'tedious' imprisonment as being caused by 'the malice, ignorance, mistake, and blinde zeal of Informers', and this is expanded in a marginal note:

'All fleshly interests, carnal Gospellers, and pretenders to Religion, with some secret enemies (though seeming friends) to the State, combining together to incense them against me, because I have faithfully and boldly declaimed against their hypocrisie, pride, covetousness, self-seeking, and villany, covered under the cloak of fleshly holiness and Religion, &c.'²⁷⁷ This note is peculiar both in itself and in context.

It contrives an attack on his accusers, dangerous enough in itself, but compounds this with a confusion which seems to include the authorities who hold the key to his release and to whom this defence is at least partly addressed within the scope of its condemnation. Coppe's attacks on the privileged in *A Fiery Flying Roll* explicitly included those in power, and he does little to exempt them from his current criticism. His attitude throughout the introductory section is an unusual variation on 'Holier than thou' - Coppe is more in touch with the will of God, and more genuine in his devotion to religion than those who accuse him. The accusations stem from '...malice, weakness, ignorance, and mistake'. His coming defence is a 'Remonstrance, Vindication and Attestation'; by no means an apology: '...pure innocence supports me, and lifts up my head above all these things.'

Coppe proceeds to the Blasphemy Act of August Ninth, addressing first the 'preamble', and affirming his commitment to the Gospel, which he makes clearly millenarian, expressing the hope that '...he, by his own

²⁷⁶ Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Dayes: The Strange Work of Abiezer Coppe', *The Seventeenth Century*, 13:2, (1998), pp.156-184, n.74, p.178. Christopher Fowler, *Daemonium Meridianum, Part One*, (London, 1655), p.60.

²⁷⁷ Andrew Hopton, (ed.), *Abiezer Coppe: Selected Writings*, Aporia Press, London, (1987), p.58. All further citations from Coppe are from this edition, unless otherwise stated.

out-stretched Arm, set it up'. Thus the Gospel is not a book, the message of which must be related to the ignorant, but a state of affairs which must be brought into being²⁷⁸. Coppe's revolution is a revolution of the self - he goes on to declare that he does not repent of being made a sign and a wonder (like Isaiah before him). Isaiah is not Coppe's only 'forerunner', a less explicit reference in a parenthetical commentary draws this relationship between Coppe and another figure regarded as 'a Blasphemer, a Devil &c.', the reference here presumably being to Christ (see Mat 9.3., for example). To describe Christ as one's own 'forerunner' is to place him in a relationship of subservience, or at most equality.²⁷⁹ Coppe's millenarianism involves the accession of a large proportion of the population to union with God. In this he differs little, if at all from the Quakers, who emerge shortly as the next sectarian sensation, and who also adopt 'strange postures', although in a rather more purposeful and organised way than Coppe. Such symbolic actions are a way of making an internal 'overturning' visible and public.²⁸⁰

Coppe condemns 'Prophaneness and Wickedness' briskly, claiming to have 'by Life and Conversation, by Doctrine and Example (for many years) decried them;'. 'Superstition and Formality' we know Coppe has preached and written against; 'Has any been a Boanerges on this account?' he asks ironically, 'I have thundered more against them than they all.' Coppe maintains that it is exactly his attacks on 'finer and subtiller pieces of Formality', which were the reason 'the coals were first kindled against me'. After associating himself with the Holy Prophets and Servants of

²⁷⁸ It seems to me there is no conflict between millenarianism and the desire to create an 'apostolic, egalitarian communism' (A.L.Morton, in Greaves and Zaller, Vol.1, p.174), a conjunction of which Robert Kenny implies criticism in 'In These Last Dayes'. In fact, in the politico/religious debates of the period the two positions were closely interrelated, even indistinguishable. Apostolic communism seems to be the inevitable outcome of the Millennium, as anticipated by Winstanley, Coppe, and the Quakers.

²⁷⁹ This is perhaps an example of what John Tickell (*The Bottomles Pit*) and Geoffrey Nuttall ('James Nayler: a different view') have both considered a hallmark of 'Familiism', the opinion that Christ is a 'type', an example, in this case of how regenerated man is, acts and believes when God has risen in him, rather than a unique historical individual.

²⁸⁰ See Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few*.

the Lord, and claiming to 'laugh' at his current persecution, Coppe addresses the 'Execrable Opinions' outlawed by the Act of August Ninth. The first of these, 'the denial of the necessity of Civil and Moral righteousness amongst men', Coppe turns into an opportunity to affirm his own essential moral rule: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do you to them,' and to defend his own innocence: 'Whom have I dealt unjustly with? Where is ever a drop of blood that I have shed? whom have I defrauded of a shoo-latchet or a thred?'. This defence is undertaken with two contrasting attitudes; 'boldly (as in reference to the grace of God) though in all humility (as in reference to myself)'. This 'humility' seems not very profound, accompanied as it is by the clear assurance of the grace of God, but the attitude expressed is close enough to that of orthodox Calvinism to resemble a Jonsonian parody of 'Puritan' cant.

Coppe moves on to the remaining 'opinions', which he condemns first together and then singly, after three points resorting to bunching them together in little groups. The individual responses in this section afford Coppe the opportunity to both assert his own theology and attack the 'formal' and 'notional' 'carnal mock-holiness, pseud-holiness of man which is a cloak for all manner of villany;', implicating his opponents in this characterisation. Coppe denies that he affirms himself 'to be very God', or that he has ever done so;

but this I have and do affirm, and shall still
upon the housetops affirm, and shall expire with
the wholesome sound, and orthodoxal opinion That
God Christ is in the creature
[--- CHRIST IN YOU except you are reprobates, 1
Cor.]
The contrary assertion is the Blasphemie of
Blasphemies, &c.

(A Remonstrance, in Hopton, p.60)

The next point allows Coppe to re-affirm his egalitarianism by another route. He denies that he ever held that God is solely within the creature (the created being, that is, rather than the creator) a belief which would be more

psychological and modern than Coppe's revelatory millennial enthusiasm. As counterpart to this denial he asserts the 'Omnipresencie' of God, an orthodox opinion which radicalism was gradually turning in strange new directions, towards fairer treatment for animals, even vegetarianism, and to the near-idolatry of Winstanley's 'pantheism', as Hill terms it. This consciousness of a God immanent throughout creation is significant in Coppe's extreme egalitarianism. It is the impulse which enables Ranters to proclaim that 'all is good', with all its dangerous implications.

The next points are dealt with in groups, although 'prophane swearing' is certainly part of Coppe's reputation easier to believe than accounts of orgiastic rituals, which seem more wishful thinking than anything else²⁸¹. After these clumps of sin have been dismissed in peremptory fashion, Coppe turns to an 'Affirmation and Asseveration' on the issues of 'Heaven, and Hell, Salvation, and Damnation'. Whilst he upholds the orthodox view that such places or states exist, he turns this round to threaten his opponents.

Heaven for all them that have Christ, the King
of Glory, Eternal Majestie, in them. And Hell,
and Damnation, to all that *touch the apple of
his eye*, that oppose *the Lords Anointed*, and do
his Prophets any harm.

(A Remonstrance, in Hopton, p.61)

The implication is that those who hold him prisoner are condemned to Hell and Damnation²⁸².

In Coppe's remarks on the contentious issues of liberty and community, central to the fears of authority in regard to the radical religious underground, he attests that he desires only 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God' and briskly rejects 'sinful liberty'. This is ambiguous, and of course the ambiguity rests in the use and extent of liberty in this context. Coppe may be reasserting here, in veiled terms, a conviction that those redeemed by the Spirit of God

²⁸¹ Swearing was one of the hallmarks of the Cavalier, at least as far as their Parliamentary opponents were concerned.

are 'begodded', and beyond the moral law. In such a case, nothing could be considered 'sinful', all being good to the good. Such complete liberty certainly might be glorious, if attainable; the 'sons of God' suggests an expansion of the historical Christ into a category or type in which many may participate²⁸³. The central thrust of *A Fiery Flying Roll* was egalitarian, and the mid seventeenth century use of the word 'community' would in this context be closer to our 'communality', the idea of holding possessions in common being very strong. This is certainly Coppe's position in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, and the topic is close enough to his heart to require a spirited defence of practical charity when Coppe turns to the question of 'community'.

And as for Community, I own none but that Apostolical, Saint-like Community spoken of in the Scriptures. So far I either do or should own Community, that if flesh of my flesh be ready to perish, I either will or should call nothing that I have mine own: if I have bread, it shall or should be his; else all my religion is vain. I am for dealing bread to the hungry, for cloathing the naked, for the *breaking of every yoke, for the letting of the oppressed go free.* I am or should be as my heavenly Father, who is kinde to all, loving to all, even to the ungodly, &c. *Mat.6.* I can (through grace) pity those that are objects of compassion, and out of my poverty and penury relieve those that are in want. *And if this is to be vile, --- &c.*

(*A Remonstrance*, in Hopton, p.60)

This passage is among the most radical of the whole piece, sometimes reaching the rhythmical fervour of *A Fiery Flying Roll*. Charity was much advocated by Christ, and thus stands as virtually inarguable within seventeenth-century discourse. What is in question is the extent of it: whether Christianity applied seriously and Apostolically to the Commonwealth requires a total 'Levelling'. Coppe stops well short of asserting this here, but in the context of recent Leveller agitation and *A Fiery Flying Roll* his defence of charity could be read as an attack on property and

²⁸² The italicised portions of the text are Biblical citations, as in Ps.105.15.

²⁸³ The source for this is Pauline: Rom.8.21.

privilege. It is also clear that Coppe considers himself among the 'oppressed' who should be freed.

One point of interest in this passage is Coppe's repeated use of a peculiar construction, which alternates a predictive or absolute statement ('do', 'will', 'shall') with the deontic moral stress of the conditional 'should'. The first term of the pair both affirms and questions, exposing the reader's own position to interrogation. The 'should' subverts the firm absolute of the first term, forcing a predictive conditionality upon it, yet reinforces it through an additional moral thrust. 'Should' is directed beyond the person of Coppe to the absolute and to the reader - principally 'those in Authority' who felt sufficiently threatened or insulted by *A Fiery Flying Roll* to have imprisoned Coppe with such alacrity on its publication. 'Should' both demotes Coppe the individual (the 'in all humility'/'boldly' opposition is enacted again, far less crudely) and places the onus on us all to be '...kinde to all, loving to all, even to the ungodly, &c.'

Coppe concludes with a further swipe at the quality of the evidence against him, even should it have the imprint of 'authority'. The tone of the pamphlet as a whole is not at all that of a 'retraction'. While not as bellicose as *A Fiery Flying Roll*, it maintains a position of injured innocence in the face of unjust accusations, and completely fails to retract anything. No attempt is made to address the offence to authority and religion caused by Coppe's previous writings, and he denies all wrong-doing. This seems hardly sufficient to pacify those in authority, and so it was to prove.

In formal terms *A Remonstrance* is much more tightly structured than his previous works, clearly owing much in this regard to its dependence on the Blasphemy Act of August ninth. Coppe maintains a more consistent tone over this - much shorter - work, but shows little sign of a recantation of heretical views. The borrowing of a narrative line, and the incorporation of portions of another text, both marked

in the writings of James Nayler, are common features of the disputational writing of the period. Not only his tone, but his typography is slightly more orthodox; after all, it is also under the influence of authority - even his use of brackets seems to conform to a regular pattern, the square brackets containing intertextual material; the curved, his commentary, annotations and directions. His italics seem to have a definite purpose too, denoting the incorporation of what are otherwise largely unmarked Biblical texts.

If *A Remonstrance* seems scarcely likely to have mollified the opinion of his captors, it does at least seem to have opened a dialogue with them, and discussions with John Dury and Marchamont Nedham as representatives of the authorities eventually resulted in the publication of a second, much fuller and more emollient retraction, *Copp's Return to the Ways of Truth*.

COPP'S RETURN

The title page of *Copp's Return* recycles the 'sincere and zealous' tag of the previous pamphlet, this time in support of 'Truth' over 'error', and explicitly mentions *A Fiery Flying Roll*, claiming to clip its wings. Coppe is reluctant to admit authorship, it would seem, describing himself as 'the [supposed] author of the Fiery Flying Roll'. *Copp's Return* begins with one of his extensive lists of contents, which details chiefly seven 'errors' and their countervailing 'truths'. These seven points (in their positive form as 'truths') are as follows: There is sin, there is a God, Man is not very God, God is not confined in man, but is omnipresent, Swearing and cursing is a sin, Adultery and Fornication is a sin, and Community of wives is unlawful. The last point also promises 'something concerning Community in general, and concerning Liberty hinted at'. It is clear, then, that *Copp's Return* covers much the same ground as *A Remonstrance*, so differences must be expected in tone and attitude if Coppe seeks to redeem himself in the eyes of his captors. The final section of the contents deals with Coppe's response to 'M. Durie's Proposals', which again chiefly concern the question of sin.

Dury's 'proposals' are directed specifically to Coppe, and thus indicate the topics on which the authorities believed he was most heretical. Coppe advertises here an explanation of his understanding of the doctrine of 'filiation' or 'spiritual and mystical fraternity and union with Christ'.²⁸⁴

Coppe begins with an address :

TO THE Supream Power, THE PARLIAMENT of the
Common-wealth of England;
And to the Right Honourable the COUNCEL of
STATE,
appointed by their Authority.
(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.66)

The address is followed by an apology, or at least an expression of regret: 'I am exceedingly sorry, that I am fallen under your honours displeasure'. While Coppe says he is sorry, he makes no attempt to apologise for his actions or statements, he merely expresses regret at being punished. There follows an extensive and rather whining aside in which he bemoans the privation and poverty caused by his imprisonment, both to his wife and children and to himself. His wife is used as a lever to extract pathos from the situation, she is 'poor weak disconsolate' and 'brought (almost) to death's dore, with continual and sore anguishing', and his 'small innocent children' are 'scattered here and there in several places'. Coppe further complains that his imprisonment 'hath wasted and almost utterly undone mine and me, that I have scarce clothes to hang on my back.' This, it would seem, is why Coppe regrets falling under their honours' displeasure. However, Coppe declares that he is no longer surprised at his continued imprisonment 'in that, I have been so slow, slack, and negligent in making any address to you' (which he says he could not do until it came from his soul and heart) and also because 'your Honours have been extreamly laden, and your

²⁸⁴ Clearly, the degree to which participation in and union with the divine was possible was one of the largest points of disagreement between the free spirits of Familism, Ranterism, Anabaptism and soon Quakerism and the more sober appreciation of man's sinfulness held to by Presbyterians and other more orthodox strands of Calvinism.

ears filled brim full of complaints against me' (p.67) Coppe also humbles himself sufficiently to say 'in all humility, I stoop to, and humbly acknowledge your Justice.' (p.66)

Coppe's attitude to the complaints and complainants is hardly altered, however, although he now seeks to distinguish between the 'magistrate' whom he 'honor[s] and humbly submit[s] to' and the 'informers' to whom he attributes 'a kind of zeal' (the most positive of the motives he ascribes) as well as 'inveterate malice' 'ignorance, weakness, mistake, misapprehensions, and misunderstandings.' Coppe does admit some responsibility in this, having 'occasioned' these accusations 'by some bypast, and indeed, strange actions and carriages. And by some difficult, dark, hard, strange, harsh, almost unheard of words, and expressions of mine'. (p.67)

He then undertakes some autobiographical explanation, which a marginal note tells us he has 'been advised to' 'that I might be a warning to others'. This section tells the familiar sectarian story which Coppe has prefigured in the tale of the 'Wel-Favoured Harlot' and 'the young man devoid of understanding' in *A Fiery Flying Roll*.²⁸⁵ Coppe's metaphor for his 'journey' is the Israelites in the desert 'pitching and removing...tents from place to place', as he thought at the command of God. A marginal note qualifies the implication of divine direction: 'In this I do not in the least degree intend anything concerning the sinfulness of my life, the author whereof was the divell.' This is Coppe's first major concession, and its inclusion in the margin may suggest that it comes as an afterthought or correction to the text in order to meet objections from the Parliamentary representatives Dury and Nedham.

²⁸⁵ An allegory which bears some resemblance to the arena of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and a marked similarity of trajectory to Laurence Clarkson's account of his spiritual journey, a journey which ended for him in prison after defeat by Lodowick Muggleton. Indeed, the story of the seeker who moves from church to church seeking 'ever finer and purer forms' is common to the point of cliché in this period.

Coppe does not specify the church in which he was 'set and seated' 'Which is (now) most in request; though it hath formerly been muchly opposed: and they of that way persecuted.' I presume that he means the 'Gathered Churches' or Independents of whom Cromwell was one, rather than the competing Presbyterianism, which formerly held the ascendancy in Parliament. Coppe was himself a Baptist before his revelation, he alludes to a previous imprisonment he suffered for following this belief, and Smith and Hopton both agree that this was due to his baptising of adults in and around Warwick.

Coppe does not draw explicit parallels between these two cases of imprisonment for his religious beliefs, however; he seems rather to be asking for previous good behaviour to be taken into account. He goes on to say, in words which recall passages in *Some Sweet Sips* and *A Fiery Flying Roll*

But at length, I did for a season leave that way: and thought that I was shown a more excellent way, living and triumphing in joy unspeakable, and full of glory, in the power, spirit and life of that which I was groaping after in the figure, flesh, form and outside, &c. I was fed* with such dainties as the tongue of men and angels cannot express.

(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.68)

The asterisk refers to a marginal note, which seeks to explain the metaphorical use of the phrase 'fed with such dainties'. One might expect that Coppe would gloss this with another corrective condemnation like 'the author whereof was the divell', but on the contrary, he asserts

Viz, I was abundantly satisfied with the loving kindness of the Lord, &c. (which was clearly, purely, and freely manifested to me) and with the light of his countenance, &c. living in peace, joy, and glorious consolation. And the Lord by his spirit (in his word) revealing and opening to me many glorious things which I neither saw nor understood afore, &c.

(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.68)

The main text runs on as follows:

Unfathomable, unspeakable mysteries and glories, being clearly revealed to me.

Past finding out by any human search, or its
sharpest discernings, &c.
But at length the terrible, notable day of the
Lord stole upon me unawares, like a thief in the
night.
Even that DAY burst in upon me, which burneth
like an oven

(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.66)

Here we come to a crucial point in Coppe's retraction, where he attempts to explain his previous offensive behaviour. Characteristically of both himself and his time he explains it in terms of a Biblical metaphor, likening himself to Nebuchadnezzar, and his theology to the Tower of Babel²⁸⁶. 'I said, is this not great Babel, which I have built, &c. whereupon my KINGDOME was taken from me.'

Coppe thereby admits that he has over-reached himself and fallen into Pride. He describes his punishment in the words of Daniel, from whom he quotes repeatedly in the passage that follows (Dan.4.32-37).

And I was driven from MEN
(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.69)

He then offers a psychological explanation of this Biblical model.

i.e. That pure spark of Reason, (was for a
season) taken from me. And I driven from it;
from men, from RATIONALITY; from PURE humanity,
&c.

(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.69)

This is the second crucial concession Coppe makes to his accusers. He admits to having lost his reason, which he connects with 'pure humanity' in a way reminiscent of Winstanley, although Winstanley associates reason directly with God. This is not only a concession to his accusers, but also to those who later seek to describe his writing in terms of mental disturbance. The point that needs to be made here, I think, is that there are many good reasons for

²⁸⁶ Coppe's use of Babel here returns it to the service of orthodoxy, contradicting his previous use of the analogy in *Some Sweet Sips*, above.

mental disturbance in a period of huge political and social uncertainty.

Coppe then sets out a touching portrayal of the domestic innocence of his future behaviour:

And now since, mine UNDERSTANDING is returned to mee.
I will dwell with my WIFE, as a man of knowledge
:
I will love my little CHILDREN.
I will love all my BRETHREN, though of different statures, ages, and complexions, &c.
My strong Brethren, and my weak also, I will not offend.
My sickly ones I will pity, and visit, and be serviceable to them.
And my babe brethren, I will dandle on my knee; and do the best I can to quiet them, when they cry, and are crabbed, &c.
And with my brethren that are at age, I will dine and sup; with them I will talk and conferre.
With them I will eat drink and be merry in the Lord.

(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.69)

Only this last piece of the menu might provoke unfavourable reaction²⁸⁷, and Coppe, perhaps realising this, moves to draw his remarks to a close. Typically, he is unable to stop at once.

But I will hasten to a Conclusion,
Knowing that prolixity is not sutable to such personages, as your Honours are.
I will give but one hint: and I have done ---
(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.69)

Whereupon he embarks on, and more than fills, another Quarto page.

This little passage displays similarities with both the personal address of *A Fiery Flying Roll* and its habitual deferral - Coppe can give us only a hint, not all that he might tell us, and yet what he tells us we already know: that he has 'lien in the charnel'. While this is an

admission of (past) degradation it maintains the consistent narrative linkage between himself and the archetype of the Biblical Prophet or Apostle. This identification enables him to continue to confer the highest possible degree of respectability on his chequered career.

Apart from this exalted self-presentation Coppe does make a reasoned and emollient statement of his position.

several reports have gone of me, which have not
been (in the least degree) true.
However, I have given offence to many, and
grieved others:
For which, my heart akes, my soul is grieved,
and my bowels are kindled with compassionate
tenderness, and tender compassion towards them.
(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.70)

Not only compassionate tenderness, but also tender compassion. Less compassionate is his attitude to 'errors broached' and attributed to him.

There are many spurious brats, lately born:... ..
Some of them (indeed) look somewhat like my
children.
But however, to put all out of doubt,
Whether they are mine or no: I will not be so
full of foolish pity, as to spare them.
I will turn them out of doors, and starve them
to death.
(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.70)

In claiming ideas as his children, albeit spurious brats, Coppe reminds me of Lady Eleanor Davies (or Douglas), who also used such an image in connection with her prophecies²⁸⁸. This has been taken as an exclusively female image by some commentators²⁸⁹. Coppe does at length conclude his introduction with this admission and undertaking.

²⁸⁷ Despite excellent Biblical precedent (Luke 19.20, I Corinthians) it is part of Coppe's habitual recourse to the less puritanical elements of the Christian tradition.

²⁸⁸ Lady Eleanor's prophecies bear some stylistic similarities to Coppe's, as can be observed in *Prophetic Writings of Lady Eleanor Davies*, (ed.) Esther S. Cope, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1995).

²⁸⁹ See Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, Chapter Two, 'A Huge Loud Voice': Levelling and the Gendered Body Politic, pp.50-76, esp. p.70. Also Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: gender difference in literary discourse.', *Feminist Studies*, 13:1, (1987), pp.49-82.

Although I have been strangely acted,
And by the Devil deluded,
Yet if I might gain a Kingdom, I could neither
act, nor speak as I have done.
(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.70)

It's notable that Coppe has been acted, not actor, in these events²⁹⁰. He concludes with a further flourish of humility: 'These, with myself, I lay prostrate at your Honours feet:' (p.71)

The next section deals with the 'errors' and 'assertions' promised in the Contents.

Truth asserted against
AND
TRIUMPHING
OVER
ERROR
Now I will lay the Axe to the root of the Tree,
even to this grand Error,
(viz.) This
1. ERROR
That there is no sinne.

(*Copp's Return*, in Hopton, p.72)

That this should be given primacy seems no matter of chance. While Coppe has already admitted to losing touch with reason, it would seem it is the question of sin which most exercises those who oppose him. There are good reasons for this; sin, weighing on the human conscience, is the most reliable method for ensuring obedience to a moral code from the populace. Only if sin is internalised, and the awareness of sinfulness is maintained by each individual subject (each subject to the universal and transcendent moral law), can those in authority feel secure. The Parliament and Army have challenged so many of the ruling notions, and so much of the ruling classes, that they feel in some danger of being

²⁹⁰ For further discussion of this passive self-presentation as a feature of Quaker discourse see below, pp.260-283. It is this passage which Hill seems to deliberately distort in *A Nation of Change and Novelty*, Bookmarks, London, (1993), p.201. Hill's insertion of the word in square brackets into this citation from *Copp's Return* reverses the apparent meaning entirely; 'Yet if I might gain a Kingdom, I could neither act nor speak [but] as I have done.'

overwhelmed by lawlessness. Now that the traditional basis of authority - respect for the Monarch as Head of State and God's Regent on Earth - has been negated, the internal restraints of the individual conscience and adherence to the moral law become absolutely crucial to the maintenance of social cohesion. Coppe proceeds with a powerful statement confirming the reality of sin, which, while unequivocal in its condemnation of sinfulness, uses the corrupted nature of the post-lapsarian world to include everything and everyone. Thus Coppe admits he is a sinner, but in so doing implicates his captors as well. He begins with this blanket assertion of sinfulness.

there is not a just man upon Earth, that doth good, and sinneth not, as it is written, Ecclesiast. 7.20.)

Every man on earth, living here below, sinneth: is...a sinner, a sinner all over: full, brim-full of sin.

(Copp's Return, in Hopton, p.72)

Coppe relates an autobiographical narrative strongly reminiscent of many a Puritan, Richard Norwood and John Bunyan among them²⁹². He says he was thirteen when an awareness of sin assailed him. He swore no oaths for twenty-seven years, and was frightened by others swearing. The refusal to swear even required legal oaths was to become part of Quaker social practice. He prayed to confess his sinfulness, committed large sections of the Bible to memory, and read at least three chapters of the Bible every day. He fasted secretly and mortified himself. Nevertheless;

all my prayers tears, sighs, groans, watchings, fastings, humiliations, &c. besmeared over with filth and uncleanness.

And in the presence of the heart-searcher, and rein-tryer, I speak it: I have wept over my tears, because I could weep not more: not better, &c.

²⁹¹ See Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*. Also relevant is Walwyn's account of the trials of man under the law in *The Power of Love*, above, pp.69-82.

And I have been greatly humbled for my
humiliation, because it was not greater, not
better.

(Copp's Return, in Hopton, pp.73-74)

Coppe says he is not 'blowing a Trumpet in his own praise',
but merely establishing his experience of sin. He then
breaks into this fierce, poetic diatribe.

Oh Sin! Sin! Sin!
There is Sin!
Murther, Theft, Adultery, Drunkenness, Swearing,
Cursing, Uncleanness, Uncleanness, Covetousness,
Pride,
Cruelty, Oppression, Hypocrisie, Hatred, Envy,
Malice,
Evil surmising, is sin.

Nothing but villany, sin, and transgression in
me, the chief of sinners.
In man ---
In every man.
There is none righteous; no, not one.
None that do good; no, not one.
All are Sinners.

Thieves, little thieves, and great thieves,
drunkards, adulterers, and adulteresses.
Murtherers, little murtherers, and great
murtherers. All are Sinners. Sinners All.
(Copp's Return, in
Hopton, p.74)

There follows a passage which is intertextually linked with
Romans Ch.3., a chapter which goes on to stress free
justification through grace and Christ's redemption.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by
faith without the deeds of the law.
(Rom.3.28.)

Perhaps the most famous of Calvinist (indeed Protestant)
tenets is that people are justified by faith, not works; but
this passage threatens the overturning of Law. As Coppe goes
on to say:

But NOW the righteousness of God WITHOUT the LAW
is manifest - (Rom.3.28.)
(Copp's Return, in
Hopton, p.75)

Coppe next collaborates with Isaiah (Ch.1.) in one of that Prophet's condemnations of corruption, the 'sinful Nation', 'assemblies', 'solemn meeting', 'City', 'Princes' are all included. Coppe concludes

For we have sinned.
We, our Kings, our Rulers. Our Priests, our
Judges.
All have sinned, and gone astray.

Do sin, are sinners.
Wo be to the inhabitants of the Earth ---
The EARTH is full of sin.
There is sin, sin with a witness.
(Copp's Return, in
Hopton, p.75)

The general effect of all this seems to be to say that we are all as bad as each other, and that if Coppe is forced to accept sin, then he will leave little room for any moral superiority on the part of those in authority. He seems careful to include Kings, Rulers, Cities, Princes, and Judges in his discovery of sin, a blanket condemnation including all the ruling elements of society, past and present, and backed by impeccable Biblical authority. Little comfort here, then, for the Godly, and Coppe makes it clear that the concept of sin cuts both ways.

The last few paragraphs of this section contain Coppe's third major concession to his accusers.

And let this.....serve as sharp shears to clip
the wings of the Fiery Flying Roll: which
insinuats several blasphemous opinions, and
which insinuats that nothing is otherwise a sin,
then as men imagine it to themselves to be so:
Which, I utterly disown, and protest
against.....

Wherefore I say, let the wings of the Fiery
Flying Roll be clipt (by this large Tract
concerning sin, and by that which follows; with
my answer to Mr. Dury) and let it be thrown
headlong into its own place, the Lake of fire
and brimston, and the great Abyss from whence it
came.

And let me mourn that I and the whole world lie
in darkness, and are involved in
Sin and Wickedness.

(Copp's Return, in
Hopton, p.76)

Coppe unequivocally condemns A Fiery Flying Roll in the interest of a sinfulness which he extends to cover the face of the earth.

While this passage and some later references, especially the exchange of letters with John Dury, condemn A Fiery Flying Roll, Coppe still displays an interest in his earlier work, making reference to it as supporting material. In the following sections, Coppe's incorporation of other texts into the world of his own work is continued, notably in his appropriation of some phrases from Dury's letter to him as recurring refrains in the 'Proposals and Answers' section at the end. Coppe's acceptance of an all-embracing sinfulness implicates Nation, Rulers and Priests, and at specific points following extends an accusatory finger at the reader. His range of voices has declined, leaving only Biblical citation and his own rather oratorical presentation. Shifts of register are not so marked as in A Fiery Flying Roll, although there are still examples of both demotic and academic discourse; 'winde up all' (Hopton, p.85), 'ens entium' (p.76). The detailed and often repetitive Error/Assertion formula (which extends to the concluding 'M. Duries Proposals/Answers' section) at least enables Coppe to make an unequivocal and positive statement of his theology, a theology which, despite its adoption of a strict regime of sinfulness, remains at the extreme and fissiparous fringes of Calvinism. It will be worth examining in reasonable detail the theology Coppe still feels able to assert in the face of his interlocutors.

"PROPOSALS"

It is in his responses to 'M. Duries Proposals' that Coppe gives his fullest statement of the doctrine of 'filiation', and of his belief in the in-dwelling God.

We are partakers of the Divine nature,

through our Mystical and Spiritual Filiation,
&c.

For as the son of man partakes of his fathers
nature,
so the sons of God (in a glorious spiritual,
and unspeakable manner) partake of his nature.

As it is written, Because we are sons, therefore
he hath given us his spirit, &c.

(Copp's Return, in Hopton, p.93)

We are partakers in the Divine nature.

Through that glorious, Mystical, unfathomable,
Spiritual union which we have with Christ, and
his in-dwelling in us, &c:

And concerning this union, and in-dwelling: so
much
is throughout the Scripture:

First, Typified.
Secondly, Metaphoriz'd.
Thirdly, Alegoriz'd.
Fourthly, Prophesied.
Fifthly, Promised, [That it should be made
manifest.]
Sixtly, In plain Scripture tearms expressed.
And.
Seventhly, Joyful and Gloriously experienced.

This glorious Mystery (I say) which hath been
hid from ages, and from generations, &c.

Is held forth (in the Scriptures of truth) in
Types,
Allegories, Metaphors, Prophecies, promises in
plain tearms, and all this being confirmed by
joyful experience.

And now being he that sanctifieth, and they that
are sanctified are -- one, and he is not ashamed
to call them brethren.

And being he is in them, -- dwells in them. &c,
Joh.16
Col.1.26.27. 2Cor.6.16.

And being in him dwells ALL the fulness of the
God-head bodily -- &c.

Of his fulness we all receive, Joh.1.Colos.

Wherefore I say, of and from, and through him --
through mystical, spiritual, filiation,
fraternity, unity, and in-dwelling. We are
partakers of the Divine nature.

(Copp's Return, in
Hopton, pp.93-94)

This is the theology of human perfectibility which was shortly to inspire Quakers and bring James Nayler in turn into conflict with Parliament. The proposal, often associated with antinomianism and human perfectibility, that the Day of Judgement is to be taken as internal to the individual, a purely spiritual Armageddon, Coppe flatly rejects. This is part of the highly flexible interpretation of Scriptural events or predictions which Quakers were to make such an intense use of, but may also have been common in the religious underground. That J. Dury should question Coppe on the matter would seem to indicate that it was current in 1651.

Coppe is firm in his statement of 'filiation', insisting that the presence of God in the individual means equality with Christ, and participation in the Divine nature: 'And being in him dwells ALL the fulness of the God-head bodily -- &c.'. Coppe simultaneously declares that God is external and unknowable, but this does not act as a concession, since it forms part of his determined representation of God's contradictions and unpredictability. Thus God is '...the God of Love and peace. And a man of War. The Lyon and Lamb. The Branch, and Root. A jealous God. And the God of mercies.' (Hopton, p.77). A recurring phrase reminiscent of the broader spectrum of Ranter writings (Salmon's Heights in Depths in particular) is 'He is in the heights, in the depths, above, below.' (p.79) 'O the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, how unsearcheable.' (p.77)²⁹³. Omnipresence is used to reaffirm God's contradictions; 'He is in Heaven, Earth, Sea, Hell. The God of Hills, and of the Valleys also. He is near, and afar off, &c. He filleth all things, all places.' (p.80). In Coppe's view, God is omnipresent, both internal and external, and beyond

²⁹² I can find no exact Biblical source for this phrase, which recurs also in Anna Trapnel's *A Legacy for Saints* (1654), but it is close to the Geneva Bible's note d. to Chapter XI of Job, and to Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, 3.18-19, 'That ye, being rooted and grounded in loue, may be able to comprehend with al Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and

description or limitation. Although he can be known within through 'filiation', even 'union', 'Yet the tongue of men and angels is altogether unable to speak him forth to the full.' (p.77).

God, as Coppe makes clear, can change his mind. The stress on the contradictions of God's nature (or description) seems intended to imply that one cannot be certain what he might do, or decree, next. For example, Coppe quotes extensively from Scripture on the necessity of circumcision, only to confound it with the New Testament dismissal of it as 'nothing'. Coppe stresses God's 'unlimited Almightyness': God is able to contradict his own commands at any time. The intention may be to lend support to Joachite notions of a series of 'dispensations' (sets of conditions; rules) which are to be initiated over time. Coppe does not claim that a new dispensation is now in force, which would seem to be the burden of A Fiery Flying Roll, nor that any such new dispensation might include the abolition of sin, although these possibilities are left open.

Coppe's acceptance of sin, while wholehearted and extensive, does stress some specifics perhaps to the discomfort of his interlocutors. These are mostly in the form of compressed citation from Isaiah. The use of Biblical citation in this context is a safe way of making incendiary remarks, Biblical citation in itself having an undeniable respectability.

How is the faithfull City become an harlot ? It was full of judgement, righteousness lodged in it, but now murtherers.

The Princes are rebellious, and companions of Thieves:
EVERYONE loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards --

We, our Kings, our Rulers. Our Priests, our Judges.
All have sinned, and gone astray.
Do sin, are sinners. (Copp's Return, in Hopton, p.75)

depth and height: And to knowe the loue of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullnesse of God.'

Apart from the inevitable use of Biblical citation there are other clear intertextual elements in play. Coppe employs a sing-song repetitive refrain derived from a formulation of J.Dury's in his response to the latter's 'Proposals'. Dury's exact words are in the form of a query, 'Whether any thing be otherwise a sin, then as men imagine it to themselves to be so?' and Coppe makes attempts to find a less cumbersome formulation, so that the original phrase becomes quickly simplified. The origin of the phrase is in Dury's letter to Coppe, itself included in (appended to?) the text. Coppe's use of 'whether men imagine it to be so or no' fourteen times in two pages, while confirming his allegiance to a universal moral law, becomes something of a two-edged sword. If Coppe's adoption of his opponent's phrase indicates submission to the will and words of another, nevertheless the words can be used to cast imputations back at their source²⁹⁴. Thus while Coppe condemns 'Adulterie, Murther & Drunkenness', he treats these sins as extending to a further, internal dimension distinct from their physical manifestation (a typical gesture of the guilt culture of Calvinism) - he attacks 'heart-adultery' (Hopton, p.85) through the precedent of a preacher he heard as a boy, and he also attacks 'eye' and 'spiritual' adultery. Of 'spiritual' adultery, Coppe says 'every mans heart (even the heart of the purest and strictest) is brim full of; if they could see it.' He says further that there are all sorts of drunkards and murtherers who may 'stroak themselves on the head, and say, I thank God I am not as this drunkard, thief, or as this murtherer, &c.' (Hopton, p.89). Coppe then turns unambiguously against his accusers:

And so is pride, covetousness, hypocrisie,
 oppression,
 Tyranny, crueltie, unmercifulnesse, despising
 the poor
 and needy, who are in vile raiment, &c.

²⁹³ Bakhtin comments that 'the speech of another, once enclosed in a context, is - no matter how accurately transmitted - always subject to certain semantic changes.' Mikhael Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', (in) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (ed.) Michael Holquist, (trans. Caryl Emerson and M. Holquist), University of Texas Press, Austin: Texas, (1981), (p.340).

A sin.
 Whether men imagine it to be so or no.
 And so is doing unto others, as we would not be
 done unto ourselves, &c.

A sin.
 Whether men imagine it to be so or no.
 And the laying of Nets, Traps & Snares for the
 feet of our neighbours,
 is a sin.

Whether men imagine it to be so or no.
 And so is the not undoing of heavy burthens, the
 not letting the oppressed go free : the not
 breaking every yoak, and the not dealing of
 bread to the hungry, &c. and the hiding our
 selves from our own flesh &c.

A sin.
 Whether men imagine it to be so or no.
 (Copp's Return, in
 Hopton, p.90)

All of these undeniable sins can be attributed to those in authority, and most of them directly in their relationship to Coppe. The inclusion of Dury's text (and letter) emphasises the personal, dialogical quality of this part of the text in particular, and sharpens these criticisms. The one mysterious line in this passage is 'hiding ourselves from our own flesh', which hints at the ecstatic union of Ranter rhetoric, and which I interpret as criticising the exclusivity of the Independent Churches, whose charity was frequently closed to the indigent poor, for whom Coppe has shown consistent affection.

Coppe denies ever having been associated with the third and fourth 'proposals' commonly associated with Ranters, that men please God by sinning, and that enacting sin is the way to perfection. Laurence Clarkson attributed these beliefs retrospectively to his freelance Ranter period in the Muggletonian confessional autobiography *The Lost Sheep Found*, but Coppe seems convincing in his denials, effectively surprised:

And that to act sin is the highest way to
 perfection, is a thing I never heard started
 before; neither did I ever hear of any that held
 it.
 It is a Tenet so simply and sinfully absurd,
 That I abhor it. (Copp's
 Return, in Hopton, p.92)

With a rather weary tone he says that such proposals are

erroneous and blasphemous.
And contrary to the whole tenure of Scripture:
As also contrary to mine own experience.
For I am perswaded,
That never any man hath lien more under the
wrath and heavy displeasure of God for sin, then
I have done.

(Copp's Return, in Hopton, p.91)

Coppe is not explicit about the sort of punishment he has received as a result of God's displeasure, but one can speculate that it may be a combination of his imprisonment and his retrospective view of his exile from 'reason'. The declaration that one is free from sin is a declaration of war against social reality, its restrictions and its positioning of the subject. Coppe's acceptance of sin is not only cover for an attack on the hypocrisy of the 'Godly' but simultaneously signals his acceptance of a social reality he had rejected, even threatened, with his adoption of the voice of God²⁹⁵ □.

The 'Proposals' section concludes with a further personal address to Dury, which 'humbly expects' that his responses will earn him his release. The whole pamphlet concludes with a letter 'For his much honoured friend Mr. Marchamont Nedham' which reveals something of the editorial process Coppe's second recantation has undergone²⁹⁶ □.

I cannot question, but that I have (now) fully fulfilled your desires, and requirings therein.

²⁹⁴ Robert Kenny, in his article 'In These Last Dayes' asserts that Coppe's retractions are full and complete, indeed that Coppe's entire career as a writer is no more than a temporary aberration in an otherwise orthodox life. Thomas Corns, in *Uncloistered Virtue* (p.193) likewise states that Coppe 'fully and explicitly recanted'. I cannot agree. I believe Coppe's acknowledgement of 'sin' is turned against his accusers, and although he is quite probably sincere in his re-adoption of a theology of sinfulness, this does not offer much comfort to his accusers. I do not agree with Christopher Hill either, however, who misrepresents Coppe's retractions as satirical. The truth lies somewhere between these poles. I think Coppe offers his accusers a bare minimum, and maintains a radical theology of 'filiation' and 'omnipresencie'.

²⁹⁵ Nedham, with whom Coppe was at University, and who was himself imprisoned in Newgate only a few months earlier, is another possible conduit for the information that a published retraction might expedite his release.

By deleting what might have proved offensive to any.

By altering, correcting, and amending other things. And

By explicating some other things that might appear dubious, or difficult.

(Copp's Return, in Hopton, p.96)

This clearly demonstrates that Copp's Return itself, the first part of the text, had been submitted to Nedham and rejected as unsatisfactory. It is not possible to say quite what Coppe has been required to delete, alter, correct or amend, but despite his adoption of an extensive regime of sinfulness, his theology remains very much one of liberation, be-goddedness and egalitarianism. None of these sentiments are necessarily out of keeping with the general thrust of religious feeling in the Rump Parliament or in the Army, and Coppe seems to have fitted inside the frame of Dury's ecumenical Protestantism well enough to have gained his release. The wheedling tone of Coppe's personal pleas to both Nedham and Dury 'Relying on your sweetness, and goodness, for a continuation of your former, and undeserved favours.' (To Nedham, p.96), an obsequiousness comparable with that of the dedications to patrons in literary texts, serves to illustrate the power-relations in play. Coppe gives repeated assurances of future good behaviour in Copp's Return, which are, however, conditional on (an unpredictable) God:

I shal not cease to publish it, and what God hath wrought in me.

And as for giving assurance to the State --- which you speak of

I neither have assuarance of my self; nor can I have it from any man.

But my assuarance is in God: in whom I have hope, and full affiance, That (through his grace) I shall never return thereto again.

(Copp's Return, in Hopton, p.94)

One striking aspect of Coppe's recantations, in view of the fact that they are specifically related to A Fiery Flying Roll and based on queries from those in power, is the relative absence of any political or social element. The concentration is on theology, surprising in view of the ferocity of A Fiery Flying Roll in its attacks on the rich

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and the privileged. The concentration of the authorities on sin perhaps reflects the difficulty of condemning scripturally-based attacks on wealth and exploitation. What Coppe does have to say was clearly sufficient to gain him his release, perhaps in view of the more-or-less complete defeat of the Levellers as a political movement, and a decline in the general media and political excitement attendant on the 'Ranters' as a social phenomenon. Whatever the reason, Coppe was clearly no longer considered enough of a threat to warrant continued imprisonment, and he was released to deliver a recantation sermon, significantly at Burford, mentioned in *A Fiery Flying Roll* as the site of the suppression of the last organised group of Levellers in the New Model Army. Coppe's critic John Tickell has doubts about the extent and sincerity of his recantation '...let the world know what to expect, when the Burning Pit is opened, and the Divell loosed.'²⁹⁷ However, Coppe maintains a respectable silence, as far as the historical record can reveal²⁹⁸, for more than five years, until the beginning of 1657.

²⁹⁶ *The Bottomles Pit Smoaking*, (Oxford 1651, p.35.)

²⁹⁷ Although George Fox may have been visited in prison by a group of Ranters including Coppe during this silence. Fox, *Journal*, (ed.) Nickalls, p.195.

DIVINE FIRE-WORKS

Divine Fire-Works is printed on one side of a single sheet in four columns; it is what is called a 'broadsheet', the cheapest of press productions. The head of the first column is enlivened with a woodcut (enlarged and reproduced opposite), very rare in radical pamphlet literature, although salacious woodcuts were a feature of anti-Ranter polemics of 1650 and 1651. It is Coppe's last known prose work, and returns to the prophetic tone of *A Fiery Flying Roll*, although the object of its criticism is both less general and less clear. Divine Fire-Works is indeed a rather mysterious text, with passages of bleak poetry reminiscent of blues lyrics, or of Alan Ginsberg's 'Howl', and was only attributed to Coppe in 1972²⁹⁹. The Title-page attributes the work to ABHIAM, a nom-de-plume which combines elements of Coppe's first name (in *Some Sweet Sips* Coppe calls himself 'ABC') with the name he had reportedly adopted when 'practising physic' in Barnes - Dr. Higham. This itself seems likely to be a pun on a name of God; 'I am'. The Title is further adorned with an Apocalyptic image: the Lion and the Lamb embrace, the Lion with a sloppy grin and a flaming sword in paw, both creatures gesturing to what may be a book or a chest (the Ark of the Covenant?) from which flames and three of seven tassels (seals) are falling. Above, the sun hides its eyes behind clouds and a rainbow. The image is plainly derived from the 'Revelation of St John the Divine' describing the period immediately before Armageddon. Above the illustration runs the text:

DIVINE FIRE-WORKS
OR,
Some Sparkles from the Spirit of BURNING in
this dead Letter.
HINTING
What the Almighty Emanuel is doing in these
WIPPING Times.
AND
In this HIS day which burns as an OVEN.

²⁹⁸ Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, (1972), p.147.

IN ABHIAM.

Can any good come out of --- ? Come and See.

(Divine Fire-Works, in Hopton, p.98)

The 'attribution' IN ABHIAM could also be seen as indicating Coppe/Higham (AB.H.) as the site of burning, and further as an indication that this has been written by the divine 'I am' present within ABH. As God is identified with 'consuming fire' and the 'Spirit of burning' in the body of the text all these possible interpretations may be intended. The 'I' in abhiam is not italicised, unlike the rest of the word. Already, Coppe's characteristic style is apparent, tempting the reader on with mysterious insinuations and promises of further revelations. The text not only returns to the Apocalyptic territory of *A Fiery Flying Roll* but also, like that work, includes an account of the revelation that has led to its production.

The opening section of the work proper alludes to an event - an outbreak of 'Fire' - either symbolic or actual, which has had a variety of effects on a bestiary of symbolic animals: Dogs, a Lion, Beasts and Hell Hounds are all mentioned, as well as the Men of Sodom. These are clearly symbolic representations, but to whom they might refer is unclear. The likeliest interpretation of the LYON is Coppe himself, or the Spirit of God (who may, as before, be virtually indistinguishable from each other) indeed perhaps the Lyon represents the Spirit of God within Coppe.

The Lyon has been 'rouzed' by fire (the text is dominated by images of burning)

The Lyon, who a long time slept,
Is (by the *Consuming* Fire) out of his Den fired.
Being rouzed,
He roared,
The Beasts of the Forrest trembled.
Were any of the children frightened?
Have any of them stumbled?
Sure I am the Heathen raged.
Have any of the PEOPLE (also) a vain thing
imagined?

(Divine Fire-Works, in Hopton, p.98)

Coppe mythologises a real event, characterising the participants in symbolic, typological terms. A marginal note reinforces this interpretation but fails to elucidate what might actually have happened - perhaps no more than Coppe's public appearance dressed in blue after the divine visitation he describes in Chapter Two. The note runs 'This was the Lord knows where the 29th of the last mon. An.BLVI & besides spectators and auditors, By CRAVCVR witnessed.', altogether an explanation which makes nothing very much clearer. The interpretative method, the apocalyptic hermeneutic Coppe has applied has rendered the events invisible, encoded beyond deciphering.

The three questions in the last passage are meant to be answered in the negative, I believe, and serve to distinguish between two groups of witnesses to whatever has happened, the first being 'Beasts' and 'Heathen'²⁹⁹, who react badly. They are those who cannot receive Coppe's message, and are further characterised as 'Hell Hounds'. The other group is described as 'children' and 'people'. Coppe uses questions about this group to indicate that his return to divinely-inspired symbolic actions has not harmed or offended the innocent, or those with understanding. Other characters, 'dogs', and 'the men of Sodom' behave less predictably, the dogs' mouths being 'stopped' ('with a pure and heavenly cunning') and the men '(strangely) with blindness smitten' (p.99). Coppe seems to indicate that these groups were acted on by God: 'They also fawned, and their tails wagged &c.' 'It's the earnest of good things to come.' declares Coppe, and then, in a further echo of A *Fiery Flying Roll*, he relays the voice of God:

And thus saith our Almighty Emanuel,
My wayes are unsearchable, and my Iudgements
past finding out, &c.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.99)

God, (now Almighty Emanuel, a transfigured Christ with direct access to the Godhead) in a way reminiscent of *Coppe's Return* stresses his own mysterious and unpredictable

nature, a position we can see as being in clear opposition to Winstanley's association of the Godhead with 'Reason': Coppe's revelation is, as before, intensely unreasonable. Revelation is beyond the grasp of reason, Coppe's God is fiercely anti-rational, transcending the scope of such limited, human faculties, beyond understanding or linguistic expression. Coppe returns to a key phrase of Coppe's *Return*³⁰⁰, and then comes more directly to the edge of inexpressibility :

O the heights ! and depths ! and lengths !
and breadths ! how unsearchable? &c.

The rest is torn out,

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.99)

This textual self-immolation is, typically, promptly reversed;

Yet it's written

From

My joyous Fiery-fornace, where I am in the
Spirit on the LORD'S DAY.

Which burns as an Oven,

And where I am joyfully dwelling

With everlasting *Burnings*.

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.99)

Then there is a sort of publisher's note in which the date is expressed in Roman numerals, the significance of which will be explored later. Coppe includes the letters A.B., a reference to his own name. This note extends to locating temporally the moment of inspiration :

Felt, heard, and understood, manifested and
Revealed at the end of -- An. -- BLVI.

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.99)

a fairly comprehensive list of reception details.

²⁹⁹ 'The heathen raged' comes from Acts 4.25, and Psalm 2.1.

³⁰⁰ And other Ranter tracts, Salmon's *Heights in Depths* being only one case in point.

There is then a couplet which serves to reinforce the paradoxical nature of ultimate truth, followed by a series of teasing questions.

Let none but Angels sing this round,
The end hath the beginning found.
And what and if one risen from the dead, &c.
And what if a sleepy Lyon out of his Den fired,
&c.
Should tell you the truth ? could ye in any wise
believe?

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.99)

In the passage above Coppe reinforces the impression that the 'sleepy Lyon' is himself, and he also seems to declare himself to be 'one risen from the dead', showing an understanding of his previous long silence as an absence, or lack. Only now, with the resurgence of revelation, is Coppe once more alive to himself.

Chapter Two recounts the circumstances of Coppe's latest revelation. In this it resembles the preface of *A Fiery Flying Roll*, and this revelation is accompanied by similar impressions of heat³⁰¹:

And so lay trembling, sweating, and smoaking
(for
the space of half an hour)
(*F.F.R.*, in Hopton, p.17)

But also (on a sudden) set my body on such a
flame; that (at a distance) it would warm the
stander by,
as if they were warming their hands at a burning
fire, &c.
Then was I raised to sit up in my bed (in my
shirt)
smoaking like a furnace.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.100)

Coppe records a personal conversation with the Almighty;

He spake to me and with me, (as a friend
speaketh to his friend) of things unspeakable
and unutterable.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.100)

But Coppe's conversation with God is not all so friendly,
the Spirit within Coppe asks

I beseech thee, I beseech thee, I beseech thee
Tell me what is this ?
Then HE spake;
Whose voice once shook the earth; But now not
onely the earth,
but the heavens also Saying,
Fear not, it is I BLV!
Whereupon the Spirit within me (with exceeding
joy) exceedingly groaned, & with a loud voice
out sounded
O the BLV! O the BLV! O the BLV!
And the worm, and no man said, what BLV;
Lord
He, as a loving Father, gave me (as it were) a
box 'ith' ear,
saying,
Dost not remember, when thou was't a School boy,
thou heardst this saying,
TRUE BLV will never stain, never fail,
White is the signal of innocency. BLV, of Truth
--

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, pp.100-101)

God continues, stressing his mystery, draws 'a sharp two
edged flaming sword' and says

Bear thou the typical testimony thereof.
And in a dark, low, beggarly shadow, wear BLV,
With this Superscription,
TRUE BLV I will never fail
TRUTH is great, and will prevail.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.101)

The 'typical testimony' is perhaps a term for the sort of
symbolic action that Quakers later engaged in 'for a
sign'³⁰². Coppe has preceded this with a disclaimer again
reminiscent of *A Fiery Flying Roll*

And what I am now about (with fear and
trembling, as also with high rejoycing) I can
present to you, no more, no otherwise, then as
part of the black, dark shadow of a man, against
a sun shine wall, &c.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.100)

³⁰¹Further similarities of imagery, involving both Lion and Oven, can be
found in the introductory paragraph to Ch.3 of the second *Fiery Flying
Roule*, (Hopton, p.39)

Coppe's image of a man reduced to a silhouette serves to describe his sense of the loss of wholeness, 'colour' and 'depth' inherent in a merely linguistic representation. Coppe's equivalent statement of the inadequacy of language from *A Fiery Flying Roll* runs: '(and take what you can of it in these expressions, though the matter is beyond expression)' (in Hopton, p.17).

God's message is a conflation of the number of the year expressed in Roman numerals and the name of a colour. In our own time the attempt to synthesise different forms of information and imbue them with personal significance might be taken as a symptom of 'psychosis', but in the mid-Seventeenth Century there are widespread interpretative efforts based on loose systems of sympathetic magic³⁰³ and Cabalistic numerology, an interest only intensified by Millenarian concerns. God gives Coppe specific instructions to wear blue and carry a message. Coppe responds with soul-searching, followed by what is either a declaration of his intention to behave as God requires, or a declaration by the indwelling God to protect Coppe in his mission.

And the Spirit within me sounded forth,
O eternal spirit of TRUTH, which will never
fail.
What am I, a worm and no man ? --
--A Nazarite (By the Lord of Hosts, which
dwelleth in Mount Sion)
made blacker then a cole --
-- Not known in the streets --
Known at home Only.
Fear thou not, I am thine, & I am with thee
and a wal of fire round about thee
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.101)

Coppe's conscious self (the 'worm') fails to understand God's message: 'What BLV; Lord' he asks, despite the response of the Spirit within him, which has already 'out sounded O the BLV !' (p.100). God rebukes him, giving him '(as it were) a box 'ith' ear'. Coppe's apparently close

³⁰²See Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few*. Nayler's entry into Bristol is only the most notorious of such actions.

³⁰³ Often based on physical resemblances, as with the 'doctrine of signatures' in Paracelsan medicine, for example.

personal relationship with God blends the two voices characteristically into virtual indistinguishability.

I will also tell thee what I am doing in
These whipping Times,
And in this my Day
Which burns as an OVEN
Hark !

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, pp.101-102)

*

'What the Lord is doing in these whipping times ?'

is the heading of the final Chapter, Chapter Three, which is divided into eight verses (the final two of which are both numbered seven), and composed in a bleak, rhythmical and repetitive prosody, reiterating phrases from the Prophetic books of Isaiah, Malachi and Nahum, as well as the Gospel of Luke. The text is filled with images of burning, whipping and winnowing.

There is a grim, triumphant nihilism, and a bitter, destructive tone, which has little of the countervailing playful energy of *A Fiery Flying Roll*. Misogynistic and vengeful, the writing generates a dark power through repetition and the recycling of Biblical symbolism.

The first verse or section adopts the Voice of God, a God characterised as 'the consuming fire'³⁰⁴ - by no means a God of mercy, but a deity determined on the ruthless imposition of retributive justice.

Hark
The noise of a whip, on top of the Mountains,
Whip and burn, whip and burn, whip & burn,
I, THE consuming fire in An. BLVII --
have bowed the heavens, & am come down,

³⁰⁴ *F.F.R.*, especially part two, features several references to fire, 'unquenchable fire' being mentioned in the introduction to the section, for example.

where the agent 'unquenchable Fire' which is to act on the passive object 'chaff' is moved from the end of the first line to the beginning of the third, contributing both to the impression of coherence (the fact of cohesion) and the impression of inevitability which Coppe seeks to convey.

The image of a whip on the mountains may have been suggested by Coppe's old favourite Isaiah, who makes reference to 'threshing the mountains', but I can find no direct biblical parallel with either this image or the recurrent phrases involving 'whipping time', and I think we can take them as being of Coppe's own invention.

The second section is in close relation with the verse from Malachi cited in the text, but deviates from that verse in its temporal focus, making a statement of current fact rather than a prophecy of future events.

It's a whipping Time. The day burns as an Oven.
Wherein (II) all the proud, and all that do
wickedly shall be stubble.
And the day that cometh, and [NOW is] shall BURN
them up.
It shall leave them neither root nor branch.
Mal.4.1. Learn what it meaneth,
Whom it hitteth it hitteth.
It's a whipping time.

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.102)

Coppe's additions to Malachi 4.1. are two 'it's a whipping time' tags which serve to open and close the section, the parenthesised interjection 'NOW is' and the half-rhymed chant, taunt and warning 'Learn what it meaneth, Whom it hitteth it hitteth.' These mainly constitute a framing device which claims relevance and cohesion for this Biblical citation, seeking to tie this prophecy to Coppe's own prophetic moment, and they combine with the interjection 'NOW is' to convey this immediacy.

The elisions from the King James text also serve to bring the prophecy into immediate effect: '...the day cometh, *that shall* burn as an oven.' (my emphasis) but also remove a 'yea' and a 'saith the Lord of hosts' which Coppe either forgets or considers unnecessary reinforcements to his own

prophetic voice. In line with his seeming pyromania, Coppe chooses to capitalise the word 'BURN'.

Malachi 4. ends with a prophecy of the return of 'Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.' Whether he seeks to associate himself with Elijah or not, there can be no doubt that Coppe's own personal apocalypse has returned to him.

The effect of the 'whipping time' framing device - a strategy of cohesion - is to incorporate Malachi's text within Coppe's own. The significance of Malachi's text for Coppe at a personal level would seem to be in its references to burning, which for Coppe are related to both the fire of Chapter One and the fever (caused by God, 'the Spirit of burning') detailed in Chapter Two. Coppe's strategy in incorporating Malachi into his text is to add Biblical authority to his own pronouncements, whilst placing the responsibility of condemning the proud and wicked on the unimpeachable authority of an Old Testament Prophet. Coppe clearly feels Malachi to be currently relevant, but his own contributions are confined to pointing this out, rather than criticising any in his own words.

Section Three focuses its warnings of forthcoming judgement on those who pretend to be 'holier than thou' - always a sharp contest within the Sectarian fringes, where different attitudes towards forms of religious observance and the inspiration of the Spirit lead to accusations of atheism or formalism from each side of the divide. Coppe has already made extensive satirical play on the minutiae of formalism in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, and clearly has a tendency to see the formalities of religion as the provenance of hypocrites, 'whited sepulchres' and those ignorant of God's real message, 'professors' who claim religion without inner understanding.

And he that a TRUTH, and no lye, hath bowed the
heavens,
and is come down.
III TO whip the Thieves out of his own *Temple.
And amongst all the rabble that are there, he

wil whip out that old thief, that foul and
unclean spirit that saith, Stand back, I am
holier then thou, &c.
That Thief also shall not scape his Lash,
who saith, Lo here or to shere, &c,
These are whipping time; and
The day Burns as an Oven.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.98)

The reference to thieves is clearly related to Christ's expulsion of the money-changers, and the asterisk accompanying 'Temple' leads to a marginal note which stresses the metaphorical use of this word as a description of each person: 'Ye are the Temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, &c. 1 Cor.6. 2 Cor.6.15.' These citations from Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians also serve to restate Coppe's conviction of God as an indwelling Spirit. This metaphorical usage, part of a general tendency to interpret allegorically all manner of events, statements and individuals from the Bible, gives the casting out of thieves from the Temple an internal, psychological dimension which tends to depict the individual in terms of an area or space occupied by various warring spirits, an attitude Coppe has previously espoused in his depiction of the 'Holy Scripturian Whore' or 'Wel-favored Harlot' of *A Fiery Flying Roll*. This view is taken to an extreme in the writings of James Nayler. The 'holier than thou' figure derives from Isaiah, 65.5., which continues 'These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.'

The mysterious phrase 'Lo here or to shere' is italicised, which indicates a likelihood of its being a quotation, and it is certainly presented as reported speech. 'Shere' seems meaningless, and I think it likely to be a misprint for 'there'. The likeliest source is Christ's location of the Kingdom of God as not here or there, but within (Luke 17.21). The reference in the marginal note to 1Cor.6. is frankly irrelevant, dealing largely with fornication, and it is in fact 2Cor.6.16. which contains the phrases 'for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them', not verse 15. Coppe's first reference is in any case incomplete, and there is the possibility of another misprint here. This section suffers

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grammatical lapses which may be due to an illegible manuscript or printer's error: 'He that a TRUTH' 'These are whipping time.' Indeed, section four also contains questionable typography: 'To cry every mans work so as by Fire;'.

The emphasis seems to be placed on the individual as God's temple by both marginal note and text proper, but Coppe might be happy with an uncertainty as to whether he speaks of a Church or of people. One typically paradoxical point is clear; Coppe decries those who arrogate holiness to themselves, yet makes this accusation out of his special relationship with God. The dangers of Coppe's radical subjectivism are implicit here, for who can judge or measure degrees of holiness? What Coppe implies, both the exclusion of various sorts of people as unworthy or unclean from separatist congregations -the sort of spiritual pride which sees itself as the epitome of holiness- and the opposition between different believers each of whom represents themselves as having a better understanding of God's desires and purposes than any other are at the root of the disagreements which paralysed the late Republic. Most disparaged of all approaches to religious and other knowledge after the re-imposition of the Monarchy was Coppe's - and the Quaker's - belief in direct revelation from God, in itself perhaps the manifestation of Coppe's radical subjectivism, which, while perfectly respectable for Dr. John Dee under Elizabeth came to be thoroughly and determinedly supplanted by Boyle's carefully collective and consensual rhetoric and practice as the proper way to obtain, ratify and present knowledge³⁰⁷. Thus also does the use of the term 'experimental' undergo a profound shift, from the experiential understanding of God for the Radical

³⁰⁷ For Dr. Dee, see Nicholas Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion*, Routledge, London, (1988). For the Royal Society: Steven Shapin & Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, (1985); J.R. Jacob, *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution*, New York, (1977); M.C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, Harvester, Hassocks, (1976); C. Hill, 'Heresy and Radical Politics' (in) *Collected Essays*, Vol.2, Harvester, Brighton, (1986), p.135.

Protestants to the 'experimental method' of Boyle and the Royal Society³⁰⁸.

Section Four of Chapter III reiterates Coppe's familiar identification of God as 'a consuming Fire', which he greets with 'exceeding, exceeding joy'. God's purpose in his new manifestation is 'To cry every mans work as by Fire' (a clear misprint, 'cry' for 'try'). Coppe continues:

and this consuming fire shall enter into the
marrow and the bones,
and search the heart and the veins :
And shall go on and do its work, as it hath
begun :
And turn the IN-side outwards.
To the eternal fame of some; and to the
everlasting shame of others.
Let the later expect what is coming upon them
with a vengeance.
The day burns like an Oven.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.103)

This passage relates God's coming in terms of Coppe's own feverish visitation, stressing the internal action of fire, tipping the uncertain balance of Section Three towards an internal, psycho-physiological apocalypse. The consuming fire will 'enter into the marrow and the bones' and 'turn the IN-side outwards', revealing the true moral nature of each person. This inversion of normal physiology thus has a moral rather than a physical effect, it is a making of the hidden and invisible open to public view. That this should be expressed in terms of the body is not only a Seventeenth Century habit, as with 'the bowells of compassion' but relates to Coppe's own premonitory visitation by fire and fever: Coppe fully expects his own bodily situation to be repeated in the rest of the population, and for this to have spiritual/psychological effects, driving out unclean spirits, particularly those of hypocritical authority (Section Three) and exposing moral impurity to public view. The Spirit of God is to enter the marrow and search the heart, affirming deep penetration and moral scrutiny while

³⁰⁸ See Schapin and Shaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, for Boyle and his consensual prose. M.C. Jacob, *The Newtonians* for Boyle's concern to restrain enthusiasm.

maintaining immediate physicality. An infection by the consuming fire produces violent symptoms for which there is no cure. The divine disease has topical sites of infection and a pathology which is to result in serious consequences; for many, the prognosis is grave. In this passage Coppe comes as close as anywhere to the medicalisation of his work complained of by Clement Hawes³⁰⁹. It is significant that Coppe himself had been practising physic for some time by this point.

Section Five makes more explicit use of the concept of Divine vengeance than Section Four, and goes on to restate more fully the misidentification of God implied in Section three.

For (V) He hath bowed the Heavens and is coming
down in flaming Fire,
To render vengeance to those that know him not;
especially to those who talk much of him, yet
call him, Beelzebub, &c. &c. &c.
These are whipping times.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.103)

This is not merely a matter of the Prophet being taken for a fool, or even Jesus being called a blasphemer, but yet more seriously, the true God mistaken for the Devil. I feel there is a personal edge here, and that Coppe has experienced just such a misidentification; the Spirit of God in him has been called a 'Divell' by at least John Tickell.

For (VI) he hath bowed the heavens, and is come
to whip
Those froward foolish children who call their
Father Rogue, if he appear in any garb then what
they have usually seen him in, &c.
And he will never give over whipping them, till
they give over saying to him, What dost thou ?
Till they give over injoyning him his way, &c.
And daring to be so arrogantly foolish, as
To JUDGE the things THEY know not --
He that hath an ear to hear let him hear.
And AL shall feel,
It is a whipping time.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.103)

³⁰⁹ Clement Hawes, *Mania*, esp. Ch.3, 'Strange acts and prophetic pranks', pp.77-97.

The message here is clear: it is dangerous to judge God. God may choose to act in strange ways, and to take unfamiliar guises (like Abiezer, for example). Coppe seems to feel he has been recently and unjustly judged by some figure of authority, perhaps in his local Church. The typographical emphasis on 'they' would stress the sentence in such a way as to imply that 'they' are somehow peculiarly incompetent to make such judgements. The impression is that Coppe has been accused by formalists of improper or unconventional behaviour.

From this point on, in the Sections marked seven, Coppe's tone becomes darkly misogynistic, with an edge of sexual contempt, even sexual aggression. The first of these two longer passages engages intertextually with Coppe's old favourite Isaiah, in this case Isa.3., including pieces of verses 16, 17, 18, 22 & 24. The sexual aggression focuses on the figure of God's 'dearly beloved daughter of Sion', whom I take to represent a form of Church, and who will be 'soundly scourged, 'run...through and through' 'with the sharp two-edged sword' by the 'roaring ramping Lyon'.

The return of the Lyon, indistinguishably God, Coppe, or God-within-Coppe ties this section to the opening Chapter, also sharing some imagery with *A Fiery Flying Roll*, where in the introduction to 2.3. Coppe advertises

A strange, yet most true story: under which is couched that Lion, whose roaring shall make all the beasts of the field tremble, and all the Kingdoms of the earth quake. Wherein also (in part) the subtilty of the wel-favoured Harlot is discovered, and her flesh burning with that fire, which shall burn down all Churches, except that of the first Born, &c.

(*FFR*, in Hopton, p.39)

The feminine depiction of a despised church is also prefigured in *A Fiery Flying Roll*; at the end of Chapter Six in the first roll Coppe describes being assailed by Anabaptists when he attempts to preach to them. He associates them with 'the wel-favor'd harlot' and concludes his story 'And to thine shame and damnation (O mother of

witchcrafts, who dwellest in gathered Churches) let this be told abroad: And let her FLESH be burnt with FIRE. Amen, *Halelujah.*' (Hopton, pp.39-40). The feminisation of the Church is a frequently used Christian interpretative manoeuvre; the Church is described as 'the Bride of Christ', for example, a figure used to explain the frankly secular 'Song of Solomon' in religious terms.

For (VII) He hath bowed the Heavens,
and is come down to whip and burn,
whip and burn.--
None shall escape his lash,
No, not his dearly beloved Daughter of Sion.
Among many other things he will soundly scourge
her for
her haughtinesses, and outstretched neckedness.
For holding her neck so high.
For her cursed Scorn, Hellish Pride and
niceness.
For not remembering her Sister Sodom in the day
of her pride, &c.
And the roaring ramping Lyon, with the sharp
two-edged Sword, wil run her through and
through.
And with unquenchable fire
Will burn up the bravery of their tinkling
Ornaments.

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.103-104)

The shift into the plural from the symbolic singular of 'daughter of Sion' strengthens the connections with Isaiah, who criticises the 'daughters of Zion' in the alarmingly misogynistic terms which Coppe reiterates. The use of such Biblical intertextuality serves to simultaneously distance himself as an individual from his judgements, and to reinforce their authority. Biblical citation -however misogynistic- is beyond criticism in the usual course of religious disputation. The criticism of ornaments, (and the further list which is soon coming) chimes well with Coppe's criticism of Formalism in previous works.

The bracelets, &c. The changeable Suits of
apparel, &c.
The Glasses, and fine Linnen. The hoods and the
Vails, &c.
And instead of sweet smelling there shall be a
stink;
And BURNING instead of Beauty.
And because she turneth away her eyes from her
own flesh,
yea, and denies her own Spirit and Life;

Yea her Father that begot her; and
Her eldest Brother, the Heir of all,
For this her haughtiness, and stretched-
neckedness, she shall not onely be whipt, but
also the crown of the head of the Daughter of
Sion shall be smitten with a Scab.
And
The Lord wil discover her SECRET parts.
And this shall be done to the green Tree.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.104)

The scab on the head was already traditional by Isaiah's time, one of the curses on the disobedient in Deuteronomy, Ch.28. Coppe excises a good deal of Isaiah's attack on the women of Israel, which he makes typological use of to criticise the 'green tree' of the reformed Church. Much of what he excludes is a list of further ornaments (the elision indicated by his characteristic '&c. '), and some further judgements expressed as oppositions. These are parts of Isaiah's text which do not fit Coppe's symbolic scheme. What Coppe adds is probably more significant - his references to whipping are not from Isaiah, the offences of cursed scorn, hellish pride and niceness are Coppe's, as are the next few lines involving Sodom, the roaring ramping Lyon, and the two-edged sword. Isaiah merely states the ornaments are to be taken away, but Coppe declares they are to be burned up 'with unquenchable fire', something we have come to expect from *Divine Fire-Works*, further emphasised by the capitalisation of 'burning'. Coppe also inserts a significant list of the offences for which 'she' is to be so punished; 'because she turneth away her eyes from her own flesh...denies her own Spirit and Life;' as well as rejecting God and Christ. It is perhaps the exclusivity of this Church to which Coppe objects. To turn away from others as though they were beneath one has always been among the greatest of sins for him.

The next Section, which is also numbered seven, begins

And if this is done to the green Tree,
(VII) What shall be done to the Dry Tree ?
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.104)

A question (from Luke) which implies a threat, but a threat which Coppe refuses to reveal:

At present I will not tell them.
They shall feel it with a witness, &c.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.104)

With a typical teasing gesture, Coppe withholds this information, although he allows sufficient hints to escape to allow us to feel that the 'Dry Tree' of the old, pre-Revolutionary church is to suffer equally or more:

And Ile only here insert a Prophecie,
which sparkled forth from the Spirit of
Prophecy,
before these whipping times were thought on or
expected.

The Prophecy.
Sith that their ways they do not mend,
Ile find a whip to scourge them by;
And with my Rod Ile make them bend,
and so divide them suddainly.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.104)

This is the second attack of rhyme and metre in *Divine Fire-Works*. The use of 'sparkled' is typically Coppeian, as in 'sparkling through these pages' and 'Some sparkles from the Spirit of BURNING', and it is clearly such sparkles of prophecy which kindle the conflagration of *Divine Fire-Works*.

Coppe continues, again echoing *A Fiery Flying Roll* in his use of the phrase 'dead letter' and the verb 'hinted';

This is the beginning of sorrows.
And this that is now (in this dead letter
hinted) is but the bare contents
of some of those many things which the
consuming fire is about to do these whipping
times;
and in this day which BURNS as an Oven;
and where in triumphs and joy I now live.
(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.104)

Coppe's view of his work once again declares the inadequacy of words to contain or iterate the force and spirit of the prophetic message; despite his efforts *Divine Fire-Works* is merely 'the bare contents' not at all a full account of the coming judgement, it is a 'dead letter', not the pure and

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overwhelming inspiration Coppe has himself received. Coppe seems content that the truth should be revealed not by prophecy but in its fulfilment.

You shall have it more at large one way or
other,
one time or other.

The End

Is not yet.

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, pp.104-105)

The page division falls between the last two lines; Coppe is playing a textual game here, indicating that while his prophecy is concluded with the formal closure of the tract, the actual events of which it is no more than a signpost are yet to manifest themselves in the world outside the textual boundaries.

The tract concludes with another attempt to express the significance of the dates on which revelation, writing and publication have taken place. Coppe's transcription of the year in letters spells out the word 'blue'. Such an association between date and revelation is also detectable in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, where Coppe seeks to give wide significance to the 'Dominicall letter D' (which he later gives as 'G' in the body of the text) (*F.F.R.* in Hopton pp.37 & 38)³¹⁰. The attempt to find mystical significance in dates is common among the Radical Protestants; much effort

³¹⁰ Dates of composition are often given by Coppe. He writes at Christmas or the (post-Caroline) New Year, January the first, as well as on his birthday (or 'nativity') in *Copp's Return* (first section). That we know this indicates that dates have some significance for him.

was put into determining the date of Judgement Day by mathematical calculations based on Biblical prophecies, and 1656 was a popular choice for those with Millenarian expectations. These efforts, which were common to such disparate figures as Richard Baxter and, (later on) Isaac Newton, are influenced by Cabalistic notions of the inherent unity and Divine inspiration of Biblical texts. Coppe attempts to unify his personal revelation with the external and objective matter of dates, a move which locates his subjectivity in significant relation to the external world.

London, Printed for the Author,

BLVI

Jan. 20. An. {

BLVII

56.

Written Jan. 1 & 3. An {

57.

True BLVI will never fail;
TRUTH is great, & will prevail.

(*Divine Fire-Works*, in Hopton, p.105)

The sequence of dating in the text as a whole indicates that the physical fire, if there was any such, took place on the twenty-ninth of December 1656, and the revelation on the night of the twenty-eighth 'from 10 at night til about 3 i'th' morning' (marginal note, Hopton p.100). There is a confusion here, though, the marginal note dating the revelation '28th Jan.', whereas the date of publication is given as eight days previous to that. I assume that Coppe has got his months muddled in an attempt to clarify the dating, and that he means December twenty-eighth of 1656.

There remain several unanswered questions with regard to *Divine Fire-Works*, among which is the marginal note on the first and second pages which includes a reference to the entirely mysterious 'CRAVCVR'. *Divine Fire-Works* is expressive of a return to the apocalyptic fervour of *A Fiery Flying Roll*, but does not exhibit quite such restless energy. Not only does the external stimulus for the production of *Divine Fire-Works* remain mysterious, but the

specific target of Coppe's wrath and contempt is also uncertain³¹¹. Coppe's focus is clearly more specific than the general condemnations of pride, privilege and power in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, but the precise subject of Coppe's anger, while certainly an exclusive and reformed Protestant Church could be a traditional Parish organisation (at this time likely to be under Presbyterian discipline) or an Independent Conventicle or 'Gathered Church'.

Divine Fire-Works avoids the general condemnations of authority and antinomian 'insinuations' which led to Coppe's arrest. It also lacks the extreme formal characteristics of the former work, which are so expressive of restless energy; the shifts of tone, the sense of excess, the narrative confusions, self-interruptions and so-on. *Divine Fire-Works* is just as condemnatory in tone, however, although its target is less general and its concerns perhaps more strictly personal than those of *A Fiery Flying Roll*; Coppe seems to have been personally offended by some specific action in some specific, local Church organisation; perhaps he has been himself excommunicated from the organisation for unorthodox behaviour or attitudes. In terms of the overall narrative of Coppe's work it indicates a return to the Apocalyptic mood of previous works, but now attenuated and narrowed, the violent revenges projected on transgressors reduced in scope to a personal, bitter level which, while present in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, was subsumed more completely within a general vision of universal justice and equality.

COPPE CONCLUSION

Abiezer Coppe is a difficult writer, one who often, and understandably, generates confusion in his readers. This confusion is not confined to what might be an appropriate

³¹¹ I find no trace of Kenny's proposed constitutional allegory in *Divine Fire-Works*, Kenny associates *DFW* with the offer of the Crown to Cromwell, (Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Dayes', p.173), but there was a period of intensified constitutional uncertainty which was marked by millennial (even messianic) expectation in the form of James Nayler's sensational entrance into Bristol and subsequent trial.

attitude to read him with (or in), as with Thomas Corns:
'The riddling humour, the uncertain balancing act between
the vatic and the banal'³¹², but also as to Coppe's actual
meaning. There are many interpretative difficulties, which
are compounded by sometimes questionable typography. A large
part of my effort has gone into making Coppe understandable,
into 'explicating some...things that might appear dubious, or
difficult'³¹³.

His writing is intense and vivid, reminiscent of Nashe, but
also of more conventional preaching voices like that of Hugh
Latimer. Without claiming any influence, Coppe's frequently
dramatic prose reminds me of *King Lear*, in particular the
speeches Lear makes near Dover (Act4, Sc.6), when Lear
unleashes his satire on wealth and authority. Coppe and Lear
share in a common tradition of the Holy Fool, or Fool for
Christ³¹⁴, a character or state frequently invoked in the
writing of the period³¹⁵, which is one route into a levelling
satire like that of Richard Overton³¹⁶.

In Byron Nelson's view³¹⁷, this jesting persona is all that
survives, and what follows is a Quaker silence, but Quaker
silence does not preclude the production of a torrent of
'railing language' directed in particular at learning,

³¹² Thomas Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue*, p.189.

³¹³ Abiezer Coppe, *Copp's Return*, (in) Hopton, p.96.

³¹⁴ Discussed by Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.52, 62, 126, 238,
338; and by Clement Hawes, *Mania*, pp.13, 26, 92.

³¹⁵ For example: *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected, and Set Forth by a Mad-
man*, (Amsterdam, 1644); William Sedgwick, *The Spiritual Madman*, (London,
1648); *The Justifycatjon of the Mad Crew*, (London, 1650); William Erbury,
The Mad Mans Plea, (London, 1653); also Clement Hawes, *Mania*, esp. ch.3,
'Strange Acts and Prophetic Pranks: Apocalypse as Process in Abiezer
Coppe', pp.77-97; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, ch.13,
'The Island of Great Bedlam', pp.277-286.

³¹⁶ Overton's first known publication is *Vox Borealis* (1640). In 1641, by
contrast, he published 35 pamphlets; 9 in 1642; nothing in 1643 (unless *The
Humble Remonstrance and Complaint of...Prisoners...for Debt* is his work, which
would imply that he was himself so imprisoned at this time), *Mans
Mortalitie* early in 1644, and *The Bishop of Canterbury his Confession* later
that year. In 1645 he begins Leveller agitation with *Englands Miserie and
Remedie* and *Englands Birthright Justified*, and he is credited with 'The
Printer to the Reader' preamble to Walwyn's *Englands Lamentable Slavery*.
Throughout 1646-1649 he concentrates on Leveller agitation, and in 1648-9
he is credited with the editorials in 'The Moderate', Gilbert Mabbott's
pro-Leveller Newsbook, issues 13-30.

It is frequently noted that Overton's attacks on the Episcopal hierarchy
were intended to appeal to the 'lower orders' from the outset.

³¹⁷ Byron Nelson, 'The Ranters and the Limits of Language', (in) *Pamphlet
Wars*, (ed.) James Holstun, pp.60-75.

tithes and priestly ordinances - Coppe's 'outward forms'. Coppe - in a manner analogous to the student radical of the 1960's - rejects the academy, but nevertheless he makes play of his education and peppers his text with Latin tags, long brackets, Greek and Hebrew characters, footnotes and marginalia; the whole apparatus of academia.

There is no doubt in my mind that Christopher Hill's description of Coppe as writing 'experimental prose' is just; it is both the prose of an experience of religious and social excitement generated by the perceived breakdown of religious and social forms and prose reaching for an expression beyond form, for a description of the direct experience of God. God presents a variety of faces, but the chief experience of him is dual, both of possibility - the possibility of unity and justice, (equity), and of certainty, the certainty of moral condemnation. If I can agree with J.C.Davis on one thing, it is that Coppe consistently considers hypocrisy a sin, an offence against God. More serious yet is 'turning away from ones own flesh', a lack of practical charity which is an offence against both God and Man³¹⁸. Coppe frequently gives moving expression to sentiments that Walwyn voices in a more reasonable tone.

The theology that Coppe dares to advance in *Coppe's Return* remains thoroughly radical: Dury's efforts for a Protestant reconciliation indicate that he was a more tolerant censor than some available to Parliament might have been. Once Coppe has accepted (one might say embraced) Sin, his theology is close to both Walwyn and the Quakers, although the Quakers hold a hard line over religious forms which Walwyn would not approve. Coppe's contempt for exclusivity,

³¹⁸ J.C.Davis, *Fear*, pp.56-57. Davis' analysis of the writing of the 'Ranters' is highly accurate in my view, particularly in distinguishing between Coppe and Clarkson on theological and stylistic grounds. It does seem to me, however, that Coppe's position on sin is closer to the 'practical antinomianism' Davis associates with Clarkson in *Fiery Flying Roll* than Davis allows. What Coppe never advocates is the theory that committing sin without guilt frees one from it. Davis conflates two different positions: Coppe holds out at least the possibility that sin may be overcome through personal unity with God, that all is good to the good; Clarkson advocates the deliberate committing of sin in order to increase freedom, 'no man could be free'd from sin, till he had acted that so called sin, as no sin'; Laurence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found*, in *C.R.W.*, p.180.

still apparent in the murky depths of *Divine Fire-Works*, might align him more closely with Walwyn than the Quakers in this matter.

Coppe's personal Apocalypse is well described by Mikhael Bakhtin's 'eschatological chronotope'³¹⁹: 'the coexistence of everything in eternity'. Coppe, and even more so the ecstatic monologues of James Nayler and Richard Farnsworth, collapse 'historical progression' into an eternalised present - or presence - the 'vertical world' Bakhtin invokes to characterise Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Dante's *Inferno*. 'In essence these forms strive to make actual that which is presumed obligatory and true, to infuse it with being, to join it to time' (p.149). With due deference to Bakhtin, I suggest that Coppe's chronotope is apocalyptic time, the moment when everything is about to happen³²⁰.

The combined threads of spiritual liberation and prophetic condemnation which Coppe and other radicals spin out of scripture serve in the longer run to expose latent - even surface - fractures in the discourse of Christianity, the most obvious being that between the Judaic tradition and Christianity as represented by St Paul. It is at least arguable that Christianity is wholly unsuitable to be a State religion. This conflict is clearly and accurately stated in the theory of dispensations as enunciated by Walwyn; it is a conflict between the Law and Love. These two dispensations offer support for alternative views of human nature. Calvinism's bleak view of the post-Lapsarian condition aligns in many respects with Hobbes' equally negative characterisation of the state of nature. These positions are opposed by Montaigne's rosier view, as relayed by Walwyn and to some extent echoed by Gerrard Winstanley. This view is strengthened by its alignment with a theology of universal salvation, 'filiation', and 'begoddedness'. This latter strand is associated with 'Humanism' by Nigel Smith

³¹⁹ Mikhael Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', (in) *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.157.

³²⁰ Bakhtin's idea of eschatological time is mirrored in Walter Benjamin's 'Messianic time', as in 'Theses on the Philosophy of History, XVIII A' (in) *Illuminations*, (ed.) Hannah Arendt, Jonathan Cape, London, (1970), p.265.

and Nicholas McDowell³²¹. Such a stress on 'humane learning' should not be allowed to obscure the importance of religious faith in the thought of the Radical Protestants.

While I certainly concur with Smith's contention that 'We must begin to rewrite the biographies of the radicals in terms that are appropriate to the kinds of knowledge they were able to deploy, and to the broader intellectual movements of which those kinds of knowledge were a part.', an increasing stress on their humanism seems only part of the picture³²². Such a partial view runs the risk of repeating Hill's conflation of different trends into a seamless narrative of 'progressive' thinking. Coppe's training in Latin, Greek and Rhetoric will have been fundamentally religious in its aims, despite Aristotelian and Ramist influence. Coppe's connection with the 'Hebraist' Ralph Button is interesting in view of his later self-inscription as Jewish. Hebrew is not generally considered to be part of the 'humanist' (that is 'secular', at least in its implied opposition with 'religious') tradition, and nor, as far as I am aware, was it part of the standard curriculum at Oxford. Study of Hebrew is strongly connected with the radical fringe of Protestantism, especially Coppe and Thomas Tany (Thereaujohn), variously described as Fifth-Monarchist, Ranter and even Quaker. Oxford was a fairly traditional and conservative educational institution (then as now).

Hill's surprising misrepresentation of *Copp's Return* should not deflect attention from the radical theology which it does plainly assert. Annabel Patterson's concept of 'functional ambiguity' has application to the reading of Ranter retractions, where a delicate negotiation has been made between what it is permitted to say and what the writer may wish to express. Such a negotiation is clearly delineated in *Copp's Return*, especially in the correspondence with Dury and Nedham. Reading such texts requires us to make a judgement on which of these factors is

³²¹ Nigel Smith, 'Atheism and Radical Speculation', (in) Hunter and Wootton; Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered'.

³²² Nigel Smith, 'Atheism and Radical Speculation' (in) Hunter and Wootton.

uppermost in the text at hand. Self-censorship is a powerful force, even in disputational literature, and even Coppe's *Fiery Flying Roll*, certainly his most notorious work, deals in 'insinuations'.

I must partially dissent, however, from Nicholas McDowell's conclusion that 'it is evident that the apparently rambling, irrational progress of Coppe's pamphlets masks a carefully designed polemical strategy, the purpose of which becomes clearer if interpreted as a dialogue with heresiographical writings of the period'³²³. Coppe may be concerned to refute a general assumption that all sectarians are ignorant and ill educated: 'the social inferiority of the sectarian stereotype from which Milton is at pains to dissociate himself'³²⁴, but it seems to me not to be one of his primary purposes, any more than it was Milton's. Coppe's displays of education may be as much to bolster his authority with his potential readership, to strengthen his claims to a prophetic voice, for, as Smith says, 'The prophet's self-presentation is crucial for the communication of inspired authority'³²⁵. Despite a widespread distrust, even dislike, of the educated elite within radical Protestantism, it may be that Coppe felt a display of education strengthened his authority as a prophet. Coppe's own education is frequently employed to attack education in general, as in Epistle III of *Some Sweet Sips*.

McDowell states that 'it is through parody that Coppe is released from the repression of forms' (p.198), but this is too narrow and exclusive an interpretation of Coppe's work as a whole. Coppe is not fundamentally 'parodic' in a general sense, he is frequently a most surprising and original writer, not one merely concerned to adopt the tone and structures of other writers in order to expose them to ridicule. Even his clear parody of Lily's Grammar is used as

³²³ Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered', p.200.

³²⁴ Lucasta Miller, 'The Shattered Violl: print and textuality in the 1640's', (in) *Literature and Censorship, Essays and Studies*, D.S.Brewer, Cambridge, (1993), ed. Nigel Smith, p.34.

³²⁵ Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.55.

a vehicle for a narrative of conversion; parody is not its prime purpose.

In contrast to Byron Nelson's view that 'the ultimate message of Ranter prose is, precisely, the limitations in language's ability to render ideas'³²⁶, Smith states that 'Human language, however simple, was always a bond on the spirit but...no radical Puritan or sectarian ignored the potential or necessity offered by particular forms of rhetorical organization or accepted social register' and 'It was not a case of simple opposition between liberty of spirit and the repressive order of language: in most cases the two principles are bound up with each other'³²⁷.

Inevitably, as Smith suggests, linguistic expression involves the use of language, and language is a highly flexible medium. Nevertheless, Coppe and the Quakers repeatedly express their belief that language itself is insufficient either to contain the force of revelation, or the psychological effect of union with an internal God. Nelson goes too far, however, when he claims 'the Ranters sought to expose the limits of language, indeed the inability of words to carry divine meanings. The play, parody and prankishness became the message.'³²⁸ Coppe and other Ranter writers are not mere comedians; funny as they may be, they have a serious message to convey.

As for the matter of misinterpretation of Coppe's actual meaning, it is not my purpose to decry the efforts of other scholars in their attempts to make Coppe accessible to a modern readership, but even such committed and expert readers as Nigel Smith and Clement Hawes seem to me responsible for misinterpretations of Coppe's writing. Byron Nelson believes that Coppe's use of the phrase 'overturn, overturn, overturn' indicates that the overturning is not happening: on the contrary, I think it indicates that Coppe

³²⁶ Byron Nelson, 'The Ranters and the Limits of Language', (in) *Pamphlet Wars*, ed. James Holstun, p.63.

³²⁷ Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp.338-339.

³²⁸ Byron Nelson, 'The Ranters and the Limits of Language', p.65.

believes it is happening³²⁹. Clement Hawes claims that a specific passage in *Some Sweet Sips* (C.R.W., p.71): 'the Elements, (Rudiments, first principles). (Imagine formall Prayer, formall Baptism...)' 'demands nothing less than an overcoming of language itself, now seen in the Pauline terms of "types" and "shadows"'³³⁰. Coppe seems explicit that in this passage he is speaking about religious practices, not verbal expression. The choice of this citation weakens Hawes' argument, and is unnecessary - Coppe's impatience with language is everywhere apparent. Nigel Smith, in a discussion of the Wel-Favoured Harlot, falls prey to such confusion when giving an account of Coppe's best-known autobiographical anecdote, his encounter with a 'most strange deformed man, clad with patcht clouts'³³¹. Smith asserts that the Wel-Favoured Harlot says the deformed man is a sinner, because he cannot feed his family, but even she is not so unreasonable as that, indeed her 'reasonableness' is part of her power as a character within Coppe³³². In fact, she threatens Coppe with the guilt of not being able to support his own family if he gives his money to the beggar:

Hee's worse than an Infidell that provides not
for his own Family.
True love begins at home, &c.
(A *Fiery Flying Roll*, in C.R.W., p.102)

My contention is that the confusion often generated by Coppe's texts springs from what Hawes describes as 'the inherent paradox in the rhetorical project of enthusiasm: to constitute, in one's very discourse, the relations of apocalyptic immanence.'³³³ It is not enough for Coppe merely to state a theological or eschatological position; he must contrive a form of expression which itself embodies the psychological affect of such a position.

³²⁹ Byron Nelson, 'The Ranters and the Limits of Language', (in) *Pamphlet Wars*, p.66.

³³⁰ Clement Hawes, *Mania*, p.79.

³³¹ *A Fiery Flying Roll*, (in) C.R.W., p.102.

³³² Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p.243.

³³³ Hawes, *Mania*, p.97.

James Holstun, who writes sensitively on the Ranters and their reception by the academy puts it well: 'The true imaginative vision of these pamphlets lies in their dogged but brilliant attempts to stake out new subject positions in a politically unsettled time - new models of writerly authority, new models of collective life in the present, new languages for a new Jerusalem'³³⁴. Coppe's writing, particularly that of 1649, attempts to instantiate such new relations between people and between God and Man.

³³⁴ James Holstun, 'Introduction', (in) *Pamphlet Wars*, p.3. See also his 'Ranting at the New Historicism', (in) *English Literary Renaissance*, 19:2, (1989).

After the execution of the King, some sort of balance had to be struck between the competing interests of Army (firmly under Cromwell's control) and 'the people', as represented traditionally within Parliament³³⁵. Those without historical voting rights remained excluded, despite the representations of Levellers and Diggers. Tensions grew in the Army command between Millenarians such as Major-General Harrison and moderates such as Lambert. Faced with the likelihood of the Rump recruiting new members and prolonging itself indefinitely, Cromwell dissolved it by force on the twentieth of April, 1653. A 'Parliament of Saints' was envisaged by the Millenarian faction, and this was attempted in the Nominated or 'Barebones' Parliament. Although Cromwell probably envisaged it as a consultative body, it declared itself a Parliament and appointed a Council of State. When moderates within Parliament felt threatened by the likelihood of radical church reform they gathered early in the morning of the twelfth of December and dissolved themselves. Cromwell again resisted direct military rule, and accepted Lambert's proposal for a written constitution called the 'Instrument of Government'. On the third of September 1654 the first Protectorate ('Addled') Parliament assembled, dominated by Presbyterians opposed to Cromwellian Independency, and immediately began to examine the 'Instrument of Government' itself. Cromwell insisted that all members should take an 'oath of recognition' of the Constitutional arrangements which sustained them. Some refused, leading to their exclusion, and this poisoned relations between Parliament and Protector. Cromwell dissolved this Parliament after an absolute minimum of five months calculated by lunar rather than calendar time, and ruled with the Council of State. A Royalist rising ('Penruddock's Rising') in Wiltshire was instrumental in Cromwell's appointing 'Major-Generals' as local military rulers. There was widespread resentment of this in the country at large, from both the 'natural rulers' and the

heartlands of Parliamentary support. The sale of former Royal lands (the 'decimation tax') sustained Government until the sea war with Spain over the West Indies, required the calling of another Parliament. This second Protectorate Parliament was vetted from the outset by Army commanders. It proposed offering the Crown to Cromwell, and a reformation of the 'Instrument of Government' called 'the Humble Petition and Advice'. Cromwell declined the Crown, following the resistance of some Army Commanders, but accepted the 'Advice' in May 1657. It was this Parliament that punished James Nayler. When it reconvened in 1658, elements previously excluded were readmitted, and began to dismantle this new Constitutional settlement. Once again, Cromwell dissolved the representative body. On the third of September 1658 Cromwell died, having appointed his son Richard as his successor.

³³⁵ Information for this chapter is drawn largely from Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, pp.203-212.

JAMES NAYLER

James Nayler was born in 1618 in the Parish of West Ardsley, near Wakefield³³⁶. Nayler provides few biographical hints of his early life, and records are sparse. It is thought he lived at Ardsley Hall, he married Ann at twenty-one, and had three daughters. He was certainly a farmer.

He joined Fairfax's regiment (with four other Naylers) in 1643, leaving his young family for nine years. For a time during Nayler's stay John Saltmarsh, (like William Erbury generally identified as a 'Seeker')³³⁷, was Regimental preacher. That year there had been fierce fighting in his locality, Fairfax expelling a Royalist garrison from Wakefield in May. To join with Parliament was to take a decisive step into a war characterised as godly, and for political justice. The New Model Army, as it was to become, developed into the principal site in which novel theologies and Millenarian interpretations of current events were generated.

Nayler was transferred to the more prestigious cavalry regiment of General Lambert, who was at one point to become Cromwell's heir apparent, and one of the regional governors of the Commonwealth under Military rule. Nayler acted as Quartermaster, which required him to arrange billeting and fodder for horses and men, something of which local populations were to grow heartily sick. He preached whilst in the army, specifically before the battle of Dunbar, but he was not an official regimental preacher. He was discharged through ill health after this battle, having participated in the defeat of the King and the Scots, passed

³³⁶ The majority of this biographical information comes from William Bittle, *James Nayler 1618-1660: The Quaker Indicted by Parliament*, William Sessions, York, (1986). Also highly useful, thoughtful and attractively partisan is: Leopold Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. & London, (1996).

through the purge of the Agitators and engaged in the greatest Constitutional disturbance of British history.

He returned to his farm, and in 1652 came across the itinerant preacher George Fox. According to his own testimony, he was subsequently called by God while ploughing, a call which threw him into a sort of paralysis. In response to an interrogation by the Justices of Appleby, he explained it thus:

I was at the plough, meditating on the things of God, and suddenly I heard a voice saying unto me, "Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house;" and I had a promise given in with it...when I came home I gave up my estate, cast out my money, but not being obedient in going forth, the wrath of God was on me, so that I was made a wonder to all, and none thought I would have lived: but (after I was made willing) I began to make some preparation, as apparel, and other necessaries, not knowing whither I should go. But shortly afterward going a-gateward with a friend from my own house, having on an old suit without any money, having neither taken leave of wife or children, nor thinking then of any journey, I was commanded to go into the West, not knowing whither I should go, nor what I was to do there; but when I had been there a little while, I had given to me what I was to declare; and ever since I have remained, not knowing today what I was to do tomorrow.

(*Sauls Errand to Damascus*, p.30)³³⁸

Nayler's early activities in Northumbria and Lancashire aroused considerable local hostility; he was beaten, indicted, imprisoned, besieged, pulled from houses and set upon by mobs. None of this deterred him. Between 1652 and 1656 there were about two hundred and fifty Quaker tracts published. Nayler was involved in forty-six of them, Fox forty-one, and Richard Farnsworth twenty-six³³⁹.

³³⁷ However, Saltmarsh's theology develops over time, as with so many radical figures. See here Morton, *The World of the Ranters*, London, (1970), Chapter 3.

³³⁸ From *Sauls Errand to Damascus*, G.Fox and J.Nayler; (London 1653), (p.30), (in) Damrosch, pp.18-19.

³³⁹ Information based on Bittle, *James Nayler*, Tables 1 & 2, pp.176-177. However, *A Discoverie of Faith* has been reattributed to Farnsworth since Bittle wrote.

In April 1653 he was released from Appleby Gaol, where he had commenced his writing career. He continued preaching in Westmorland, Durham and Yorkshire. He tried to reduce the 'proud Quaker' Rice Jones of Nottingham to conformity, but failed. He was in Chesterfield in November, and by December was embroiled in a dispute with John Billingsly, the local Pastor, over an incident of bull-baiting. In 1654 he was active in Yorkshire and Leicestershire as well as Derbyshire, where Fox reports him as having achieved a victory in debate over seven or eight priests.

In May 1655 he was in Lincolnshire. Late in June he arrived in London, immediately starting to preach and engage in public disputes. Expressions of dislike for the Quakers included throwing stones through their meeting-house windows. It was at this time that Richard Baxter engaged the Quaker movement in *The Quakers Catechism* (London 1655). In July the resident Quaker figureheads Edward Burrough and Frances Howgill left London for Ireland, and Fox arrived from Reading with his companion Alexander Parker. In about September Fox left London (where his mission was unpopular) returning only briefly in October. For several months Nayler was the principal Quaker in London, holding meetings and disputations, writing, and preaching increasingly to the well-to-do or influential. A meeting at Lady Darcy's house, at which various members of the gentry apparently listened from behind a partition included Henry Vane, to whom Nayler refers as '...very loving to Friends but drunk with imaginations.' (Swarthmore MSS. 3:80)

In the summer of 1656, Martha Simmonds, clearly a woman of great personal force, began to challenge the authority (or, in her terms, the possession of the spirit) of Burrough and Howgill, who had recently returned from Ireland. Martha was well-connected in radical circles; wife of Thomas Simmonds, (a publisher of the Quakers) and sister of the long-standing radical bookseller Giles Calvert. In the face of Quaker rebukes, Martha turned to Nayler for support. At first Nayler refused, but when Martha responded with 'I came to

Jerusalem and behold a cry'³⁴⁰ (as reported in Ralph Farmer's *Satan Inthron'd*...³⁴¹ (p.10-11)) he became afflicted by a second example of the mental paralysis that had accompanied his initial call. According to both Richard Hubberthorn and Simmonds herself, he lay for several days on a table until a group of Quakers removed him from her house, fearing that she had bewitched him, and took him to Bristol.

William Bittle³⁴² suggests that a dispute with the noted Baptist Jeremiah Ives, both verbal and printed (Ives, *The Quakers Quaking* (London, 1656), *Nayler Weaknes above Wickednes* (London, 1656)) in which he called upon the Quakers to prove their calling through miracles may have contributed to Nayler's condition. More certain is that Nayler collaborated in 1656 with Martha Simmonds and Hannah Stranger on an Apocalyptic tract known as *O England, thy time is come*. This is full of references to blood and to the purification of the body by the indwelling Christ. This notion of physical transformation, sometimes referred to as the 'Celestial Flesh' takes perfectibility to a literalist extreme³⁴³.

Nayler seems to have been withdrawn in Bristol, and was pursued there by Martha, who received scant welcome from the Bristol Quakers. It was decided to take Nayler to visit Fox, imprisoned in Launceston since January. However, before they reached him, they were themselves arrested at Okehampton,

³⁴⁰ Derived from Isaiah 5.7.

³⁴¹ Farmer was a clergyman in Bristol. He was present at Nayler's first examination in Bristol, and 'threshed mightily' by Martha Simmonds. He also attended Nayler's branding. *Satan Inthron'd in his Chair of Pestilence*... London (1657).

³⁴² William Bittle, *James Nayler 1618-1660*, (1986), p.93.

³⁴³ Simmonds enquires: 'Why should it seem a strange thing to you to see Christ reigne in his Saints and fit for himself to dwell in, seeing our hearts are ready to bow to his Will? And is it not more for his glory, though it be a greater cross to your wills, to purifie these bodies, and pour out the dregs thereof, then to bring down that body which was crucified at Jerusalem.....hath he now fitted a body for himself, who hath conquered death and hell; so perfect is he that he can lay down his life for his enemies, not opening his mouth to defend himself; this vessel is as precious to me as that which was tortured at Jerusalem, seeing the Father hath prepared them both, and the same Graces spring from both according to its time of working, which now is finisht in sufferings. Shall I not follow thee unto death, O my beloved? Yea, seeing thou art revealed in me by my Father to be the Son of Peace', *O England, thy time is come*, (p.5). See also Douglas Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, Pendle Hill, Wallingford PA, (2000), pp.242-243.

and imprisoned in Exeter, typically for refusing to remove their hats.

Whilst in Exeter, Nayler fasted for periods of up to a fortnight, taking only a little water or wine. Hearing of Nayler's imprisonment, Martha travelled to the area and demonstrated her remarkable energy and commitment by arriving unannounced at Major-General Desborough's house and nursing his sick wife back to health. In return, Desborough agreed to press for the release of Nayler and his companions. Simmonds and Hannah Stranger then went to Launceston Gaol and confronted Fox, telling him to bow down, and come down out of his wisdom and subtlety, which can hardly have pleased him.

Fox was released on September ninth, and arrived in Exeter on September twentieth. The next day Fox held a meeting in the gaol at which some of Nayler's party refused to remove their hats. Fox was finding that Quaker tactics of disrespect could be used against him. Richard Hubberthorn acted as go-between, but attempts to reconcile Nayler and Fox failed when Fox refused to accept an apple Nayler offered him, and gave Nayler his hand to kiss. When Nayler declined, Fox declared: 'It is my foot'. This presumably meant that Fox should have allowed Nayler to kiss only his foot. Fox clearly wished to impose his authority on Nayler, who, he said 'resisted the power of God in me'. Fox was not only concerned with his own authority, but also fearful of a split within the Quaker movement which would call into question their possession of an infallible Spirit. However, Margaret Fell, who acted as a central point of communication for the movement (and was later to marry Fox) described him to Nayler as one to whom God had given 'a name better than every name, to which every knee must bow'. The question of 'spirits' sometimes seems indistinguishable from a battle of personalities, and matters of soteriological, even apocalyptic significance close to mere tokens in a power struggle.

Nayler and his party were released some time before the twentieth of October, and began a journey back towards Bristol. Every so often, on entering a town they sang either 'with a melodious buzzing sound' or 'hosannas', and led Nayler's horse, laying garments in its path. Nayler took this as being made 'a sign', like Coppe before him. Seemingly irrational outbreaks of symbolic behaviour were enacted as the movings of the spirit by many Quakers. The most unusual things about this performance or event were that it involved a group, and that it represented an iconic moment in the story of Christ. In what seems to have been a re-enactment of Christ's Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem, they entered Bristol on October twenty-fourth in heavy rain. No Quakers greeted them, having been forewarned by messengers from Fox, and they were quickly detained by the Bristol Magistrates. Twenty-one letters were found on Nayler, and he and his seven companions were questioned the next day. The letters praised Nayler as 'Son of God', 'fairest of 10,000', 'Prince of Peace' and said he was 'no more to be called James, but Jesus.' Hannah Stranger and Martha Simmonds affirmed him the Prince of Peace under questioning by the Bristol Magistrates. Dorcas Erbury (probably the daughter of William Erbury, deceased army preacher, and author of *The Mad Mans Plea* (London 1653)), even more damagingly, said that he had raised her from the dead in Exeter Gaol³⁴⁴.

I was dead two days, and he laid his hands upon
my head and said, "Dorcas arise", and from that
day to this I am alive;
(Ralph Farmer, *Satan Inthroned...* p.20)

Nayler acknowledged this to be true. He plainly believed that it was. He is consistently non-authoritarian in his treatment of his group, saying that 'he may not refuse anything commanded of the Lord' and that the others 'were

³⁴⁴ Note this citation from William Erbury's *Testimony* '...these false Churches shall come down and worship at the feet of the scattered Saints, who are gathered up into Christ, and with Christ into god; they shall worship, not them, but God in them, and confess that God is in them of a truth. The power, and honour and glory of the Son, as I said, shall be manifested in the saints.' (p.14.)

all of age and might answer for themselves'³⁴⁵. When questioned about being described as Son of God and King of righteousness, Nayler replied 'I am the Son of God, and everlasting righteousness is wrought in me.' Such terminology was common in Quaker circles: Fox was similarly praised, and responded similarly under questioning at other times.

Faced with this unusual situation, and against a background of anti-Quaker disturbances, the Magistrates sent word to Parliament. Parliament formed a committee, and the committee sent for Nayler and his group. On fifteenth November the renegade Quakers were first examined. On the fifth December a detailed account of the committee's examination and deliberations was read to the House. Nayler's difficulty, as with Abiezer Coppe or St Paul, is in distinguishing the indwelling spirit from the human vehicle. Nayler treats Christ as exemplar and guide, indeed as a path to follow to God. He makes it as clear as he can to the committee that he distinguishes between the 'outward man' and the Spirit of God within him, and that he had permitted homage to the Spirit by his followers as 'they said they were moved of the Lord to do it'. For the next three weeks Parliament was almost solely occupied with James Nayler, in a wide-ranging and fascinating debate which exposed the weaknesses of the 'Instrument of Government' under which Cromwell and the second Protectorate Parliament ruled the country.

Nayler clearly challenged the limits of the religious toleration which Cromwell espoused (toleration of everyone but Bishops and Catholics), the one remaining vestige of Leveller constitutional aspirations. When called before the bar of the House he refused to kneel or take off his hat, like Lilburne before him. In an extraordinary cross-examination, he accepted all the evidence against him in the Committee's deposition. When questioned on the Bristol incident Nayler responded 'There was never anything since I was born so much against my will and mind as this thing, to

³⁴⁵ William Grigge, *The Quakers Jesus* (London 1658), p.6.

be set up as a sign in my going into these towns, for I knew that I should lay down my life for it.' (Burton, *Diary* 1:46)

Major General Skippon, in charge of London, took a strong anti-tolerantist stance in the debate. John Thurloe, head of Cromwell's secret service intervened, telling the House there was no law against Blasphemy, which may be taken to show that Cromwell opposed Nayler's prosecution. Richard Cromwell, on the other hand, favoured the death penalty. Many members wished to put Nayler to death, some by stoning. Biblical precedent was as much in play as legal.

In the event, Nayler was sentenced on December sixteenth to whipping in both London and Bristol, branding on the forehead and boring through the tongue. After whipping, Nayler was too weak to be branded, and Parliament allowed a postponement. When this punishment was enacted, on twenty-seventh of December, it too was incorporated into the Christological parallel by Martha Simmonds, Hannah Stranger and Dorcas Erbury, who assembled around the pillory in imitation of the three Marys in a popular picture of the crucifixion. Robert Rich, a merchant, went so far as to hold up a notice proclaiming Nayler 'King of the Jews'. He also sang, kissed and stroked Nayler, and licked his branding wound. It may be at this period that the apocalyptic *O England* was printed³⁴⁶.

³⁴⁶ The dating of *O England* is uncertain. There is no date or place of publication in the text. It seems likely to me that it was printed as Nayler awaited or underwent examination by Parliament, or possibly after Nayler's first punishment. One psalm-like section by Nayler is entitled 'A Morning-Song when I being in Prison at Westminster'. After sentence, Nayler was imprisoned in Newgate and Bridewell, (during his examination he was held in a house in Westminster), but Nayler's word might pre-date publication by some time. *O England* is also interesting in including the only example I know of a poem by Nayler, 'The Spring of Summer doth appear'. Simmonds writes: '*O England*, the time is come that nothing will satisfie but blood: Thou art making thy self drunken with the blood of the Innocent; he will be avenged of thee, till blood come up to the Horses bridle; thou art making thyself drunk with the blood of the innocent, and now he will give thee blood to drink, for thou art worthy; for he will be avenged of thee till he is satisfied with thy blood: Come down ye high and lofty ones and lie in the dust, and repent in sackcloth, and lie low before the Lord and come and see if by any means there may be a place for repentance found.' (p.2) and 'for now he hath prepared you a Leader and a Captain; doth not your eyes see the Lord hath prepared him a body fitted for sufferings in patience, which he hath crowned with love and meekness; so that the more you torture him, the more he loves, yet you cannot see' (p.3).

Parliament returned to debating their trial and sentence of Nayler because, on the (recently abolished) Christmas day, Cromwell wrote them a letter asking them their 'grounds and reasons'. Doubts over their constitutional rights resurfaced. The uncertain relationship between Protector and Parliament was exposed.

After the whipping was repeated in Bristol, apparently with less enthusiasm, on January seventeenth 1657, Nayler was returned to London, and imprisoned in Bridewell. At first, precautions were intense, and Nayler became ill, but by January 1658, now under the care of a Mrs. Pollard, Nayler was somewhat better, and receiving clandestine visitors. When the Rump Parliament was reinstated in December 1659 Nayler was released. He travelled to see Fox in Reading gaol, but was refused entry. He returned to London and to preaching, regaining acceptance with the London Quakers at least. His prison writings clearly aim at atoning for damage caused to the movement. Their prose can be tortuous, as Nayler defends his theology but admits to have been parted from the light. He condemns the behaviour of his group, associating it with Ranters. His customary impersonal view is strained to the limit by confession, but in *To the Life of God in All* (1659) he admits 'giving way to the reasoning part' (a complete reversal of Coppe's confessional position, although this is perhaps partly explained by the different audiences to whom the confessions are directed) and that 'spiritual adultery was committed'.

And in this same life and dominion did he bring me up into this great City *London*, into which I entered with the greatest fear that ever into any place I came, in spirit foreseeing somewhat to befall me therein...

But not minding in all things to stand single and low to the motions of that endless life, by it to be led in all things within and without, but giving way to the reasoning part, as to some things that in themselves had no seeming evil, by little and little drew out my mind after trifles, vanities' and persons which took the affectionate part...

But I could feel him in Spirit lifting up his witness against it; But when I reasoned against his tender reproof, and consulted with another, and so let the Creatures into my affections, then His temple was defiled through lust, and his pure Spirit was grieved...and so the body of sin and death was revived again, and I possessed a fresh the iniquities of my youth...and so the temple was filled with darkness, and the power of death, and my heart with sorrow, and Satan daily at my right hand to tempt me further....

I sought a place where I might have been alone to weep and cry before the Lord, that his face I might find, and my condition recover: But then my adversary who had long waited his opportunity had got it ... I gave myself wholly up to be led by others, whose work was then wholly to divide me from the Children of Light;

Thus was I led out from amongst the Children of Light and into the World to be a sign, where I was chased as a wandering Bird gone from her rest, so was my soul daily, and my body from one prison to another, til at length I was brought in their own way, before a backsliding power to be judged, who had lost their first love, as I had done, so they sentenced me, but could not see their sign, & a sign to the Nation, & a sign to the world of the dreadful day of the Just God who is come and coming to avenge for that pure life where it is transgressed... and the Cup is deep and very dreadful that is seen and filling, and it hath begun at God's house, but many must drink it except there be speedy repentance...

Thus became I an occasion to make sad the innocent and harmlesse people, whose hearts was tender, and to make glad the man that delights in mischief, and such as rejoyce in iniquity, and to gratifie many unclean Spirits:...

(To the Life of God in All... pp.1-3)

It seems to me that this is an admission of error, at least as it concerns Quakers. There is no attempt to modify his theology, however, or pacify the authorities. Nayler makes it fairly clear that by allowing 'the creature' into his affections he was parted from union with Christ, and that sin, 'the body of iniquity' returned to him. His testimony before the Bristol Magistrates and Parliament is that of one who was entirely the passive focus of what seems a deliberate sacrifice. Nayler was punished for the actions of those around him, for his fame; it was his refusal to forbid anything undertaken in good faith that led to this

confrontation. Writings from the period after his release begin to resume a more combative, polemical stance, as with *A Short Answer to a Book called The Fanatick History*, a response to *The Fanatick History* which had been newly reprinted with an Epistle to Charles, and *To those who were in AUTHORITY whom the LORD is now Judging, that they might Repent and find Mercy from God*, which was bound with *Letter to King CHARLES II*, 'written the 3rd Day of the 4th Month, 1660'. These writings are part of the attempts which all parties to the religious conflicts were making to influence the opinion of the new Government.

In February 1660, when Fox visited London, Nayler met with him, and knelt for his forgiveness. Nayler died on a journey north, having been set upon and robbed in Huntingdonshire. He was buried on the twenty-first October 1660 at Ripton Regis. His Buddhistic, even Taoist 'last words' are a moving testament of quietism and resignation³⁴⁷.

In my reading of Nayler I use only the original printed texts rather than the collection *Sundry Books...* (ed. George Whitehead, (1716)) or any more recently modernised rendition. There are significant differences in Whitehead from the original printed versions, some caused by alterations to the text, and some by adjustments of punctuation. In citations I use my own transcriptions of original printed texts in the Bevan-Naish collection held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, England.

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³⁴⁷ Taoism is an ancient Chinese religion, roughly coeval with (and in opposition to) Confucianism. While difficult to summarise, it is characterised by a philosophy of self-negation and acceptance, on the model of the passive force or energy of the 'Tao', (way). The founding text is: Lao-Tzu, *Tao-te-Ching*, (tr.) Leon Wieger, Derek Bryce, Llanerch Press, Felinfach, (1991).

RANTERS AND QUAKERS

There has been heated academic debate over the status of the Ranters. In common with many other collective nouns describing different groups or tendencies in the period, 'Ranter' is an epithet applied by others to people or beliefs of which they disapprove. Sectarians such as Familists, Brownists, Grindletonians and others were repeatedly represented by authority as dangerous, secretive, subversive cells, and as sexual libertines. 'Ranters' thus conform to a discursive 'type', or are identified with one, a type long since established in the popular imagination. One famous instance of religious controversy, 'The Marprelate Tracts', and particularly the replies attributed to Nashe, establish and foster the notion of a separatist menace. *Pierce Penniless*, a Nashe satire of 1592, attacks 'the devil's predestinate children' who 'because they will get a name for their vainglory, they will set their self-love to study new sects of singularity, by having their sects called after their names'³⁴⁸. This is directed particularly against Barrow and Greenwood, soon to be executed as heretics, but the attack includes Anabaptists and 'adulterous Familists'. The writings we know as 'Ranter Writings', those of Coppe, Salmon, Bauthumley and Clarkson (also *The Justyfycatjon of the mad crew*, although with some dissent) are not consistent in theology, style or ethos. Indeed, if 'The Ranters' had ever developed a systematic theology or a Church organisation they would have been in contradiction of their most consistently expressed beliefs. Coppe and Salmon do have similarities of expression and content, and although Coppe has a markedly more florid style, Salmon can be equally gnomic, and equally idiosyncratic. Clarkson is a quite different writer, whose antinomianism became highly practical, if his own account is to be believed. His approach to the Bible is far more instrumental; there is a sense in his work of a practical intellect testing to destruction the theological materials

³⁴⁸ Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre*, p.54. Incidentally, Nashe is one writer in whom I see stylistic similarities with Coppe, although he is on the orthodox side of this particular debate.

at his disposal. His is experimental religion of a different order, less pure research than technological application, the purpose of religion being to provide Clarkson with money and entertainment, his frankly materialist conception of Heaven.

The Justyfycatjon of the mad crew seems to me entirely likely to be genuine, although if so its purpose is difficult to discern, except as a statement of past practice. As such, it is a touching testament to a sort of spiritual indifference, a peculiar compound also found in Coppe's use of the Pauline term 'reconciled'. With Coppe, however, one feels that he is never quite to be reconciled to manifest social injustice. *The Justyfycatjon* seems closer in spirit to the shadowy 'My One Flesh' (of whom the only account is Clarkson's), perhaps also the 'Mad Folks' of Isaac Penington's dark Seeker tracts *Severall Fresh Inward Openings* (July 1650) and *An Eccho from the Great Deep* (November 1650), the former of which starts with the Coppeian phrase 'Mine own dear flesh'.

If I may attempt a definition rather broader than the literary grouping I proposed earlier, a 'Ranter' is a Seeker who, in 1649-1650, vented the opinion that a new dispensation was imminent, if not actually occurring. This is precisely the same feeling from which Quakerism arose no more than two years later, in Yorkshire and Westmorland. Quakerism might have arisen earlier, and in Nottinghamshire, had not George Fox been incarcerated (along with his then companion Elizabeth Hooton) in Derby gaol from October 1650³⁴⁹. Ranterism, in its textual remains, is Millenarian expectation raised to a high pitch. Coppe in particular makes every attempt to communicate urgency in form, expression and content, in every aspect of his work. His super-human task is to reveal the imminence of immanence. J.C. Davis, whose thesis has proved highly contentious,

³⁴⁹ Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, pp.216-223.

distinguishes well between the disparate writers we still call 'The Ranters'³⁵⁰.

Strenuous efforts were made by the Quakers to distinguish themselves from Ranters, but it is not ultimately in theology that the distinction can be made; it is in the matter of 'spirits'. Quakers too hold out the prospect of overcoming sin through the presence of Christ within. It is in the case of James Nayler that Quakers felt themselves most threatened by Ranterism. Nayler, surrounded by the erotic rhetoric of disciples whose devotion led them to proclaim his physical transformation into something more than human³⁵¹, fasting for periods of a fortnight, and assailed by a peculiar passivity which had previously caused two bouts of physical paralysis, may well have felt himself on the cusp of a new existence. He sometimes seems to take the transformation enacted by Christ within quite literally: 'When He shall appear we shall be like Him, who shall change our vile bodies and make them like his glorious body'³⁵². Further proof of closeness to the Divine was provided by Dorcas Erbury's rising from the dead. William Erbury, her father, had adopted a position of penitential waiting in his later works, one which was part of a widespread yearning for new revelations and new prophets, perhaps even a new Messiah. It is out of that culture that Coppe and the Quakers found the courage to proclaim themselves vessels of God's voice. Nayler's subsequent crucifixion seems, in a disturbing irony, savagely appropriate.

³⁵⁰ J.C.Davies, *Fear*.

³⁵¹ Martha Simmonds (et al), *O England*. Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, pp.55-56, 240-244 remarks on the doctrine of the 'Celestial Flesh', adopted by the German Caspar Schwenckfeld (born 1489 in Silesia), in which the Celestial Flesh of Christ (the Word made flesh) within the believer acts on the believer's own body. There may be traces of this within Familism, and while no line of transmission can be shown from Schwenckfeld to the Quakers, his idea of the Celestial flesh within waging constant war with the unregenerate flesh of the human body seems close to Quaker rhetoric. See also Richard Bailey, *New Light on George Fox and Early Quakerism: The Making and Unmaking of a God*, Mellen Research University Press, San Francisco, (1992), which proposes that Fox too believed in the literal transformation of the flesh of the believer through inhabitation by the flesh and bone of Christ.

³⁵² James Nayler, *What the Possession of the Living Faith Is*, (1659).

QUAKER POETICS:

early writings of James Nayler and Richard Farnsworth

Amidst the Babel-tongued chaos of mid-seventeenth-century religious/political discourse one sect holds a particular interest for the literary scholar due to an intriguing combination of distrust for and reliance on the word, or 'letter'. The Society of Friends, 'Quakers', are one of the few of the multifarious sects of the period which has survived as an organisation up to the present day, and this survival, coupled with their remarkable penchant for both recording their thoughts and preserving their communications, presents scholars with a considerable resource for the study of their attitudes.

Quakerism, which had no particular name or organisation at first, (although Quakers sometimes referred to themselves as the 'Children of the Light'), was founded in the north of England from the meeting of George Fox with Richard Farnsworth, James Nayler and others. Fox was from Leicestershire. He had been arrested in Mansfield for disturbing Church services with Elizabeth Hooton, a Nottingham Baptist, and imprisoned for a year in Derby gaol, from October 1650³⁵³. Quakerism sprang from the same 'Seekerism' which had spawned the Ranters, and shared the Seeker/Ranter notion of perfectibility through union with the indwelling spirit of Christ. The idea of human perfectibility held out the possibility of removing the burden of sin to those tormented by the Calvinist conscience, and Calvinist fear of predestined 'reprobation'. What Fox promulgated among the Seekers of Yorkshire and Westmorland was not so much an original theology as a new technique for seeking. Instead of searching externally for

³⁵³ This was during the height of the 'Ranter' panic, and Fox was perhaps fortunate not to be active at this time. A good brief account of George Fox's immediate pre-Quaker career is in Douglas Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford PA, (2000), pp.216-223.

'ever finer forms', or passively awaiting a new dispensation to be revealed by a new teacher, Fox advised his listeners to 'wait wholly within' until the way was shown to each. Despite later Quaker disavowals of any new dispensation, Fox claimed to work miracles, and described himself as the Son of God. Quakers adhered closely to Apostolic practice, travelling 'without bag or scrip', leaving their farms and families and spreading the new message, at first verbally, but soon in print.

From late 1652 or early 1653 Quakers produced an enormous quantity of literature both for general proselytising and for the support and re-assurance of their growing band of converts. Their tracts are marked by singular force of expression and uncompromising principle. As with the writings of Walwyn or Coppe - any writing - it is neither possible nor advisable to attempt the separation of style, content and principle, as each informs and is formed by each.

In the early period Quakers were mostly small farmers, 'unlearned men, fishermen, ploughmen and herdsmen'³⁵⁴. Barry Reay details the geographical and social extent of their ministry during this early period³⁵⁵. Their literature was composed largely by men (although Quakers recognised no difference between the sexes 'in the Spirit') drawn from these same 'lower' social echelons and is marked by its stern, even contemptuous attitude towards textual interpretation by 'the letter' rather than 'the Spirit' of the Biblical texts which provided the grounding and authority of mid-seventeenth-century discourse. Their social background and their comparative lack of education³⁵⁶, combined with a resentment of the assumption (frequently declaration) that only the educated were fit interpreters of

³⁵⁴ James Nayler, *The Power and Glory of the Lord Shining Out of the North*, (1653).

³⁵⁵ Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, Temple Smith, London, (1985).

the Gospel, led to a wholesale rejection of expert Biblical interpretation by the University-educated priesthood as the 'subtil' 'wresting' of the Word of God. Thus, for James Nayler, 'priests' are doing the work of the 'Serpent'; are in fact Servants of Antichrist. The 'first man', the 'naturall', earthly and sinful man

boasts of learning and of tongues which are naturall, and these he uses to defraud oppresse and over reach the simple, to revenge, covet and heap together things that are for corruption, and with the same natural knowledge and tongues he steps into the throne of Christ and judges of the pure invisible things of God, comparing spirituall things with carnal, and thinkes none knows more than he, but knowes nothing as he ought to know; yet with this knowledge, and that power he hath got in the earth, he sits as judge and condemns the innocent, and lets the guiltie go free, for being spiritually blind he calls evill good and good evil, and his seat is in the powers of the earth, and there he sits as Lord from the beginning, bearing rule by his meanes, and here he exerciseth his authoritie and is Heathen, and is Prince in the Air, and hath the powers of darkness committed to him, but blessed be the Father who has hid the glorious things of the Kingdome from him, and hath appointed that this Princely wisdom of his shall come to naught.

(Nayler, *A Discoverie of the First Wisdom*, pp.9-10)³⁵⁷

All of which goes to demonstrate a suspicion of expert opinion and as intense an anti-clericalism as William Walwyn's. This social and ideological background leads Quakers to a form of expression quite distinct from the clergy of the high church, heirs of such as John Donne, or from their closer doctrinal relatives among the Calvinist/Puritan clergy (with whom, if anything, their disagreements were all the sharper). Quakers strive to 'speak' only that which is true and necessary to be said, and their major stylistic resource is the Bible. Unnecessary speech and formal conventions of politeness were explicitly rejected: Quakers felt they owed no respect to the

³⁵⁶ None of the major proselytizers of the early years had received any University education, a pre-requisite for clergymen of the Established Church, whether 'Puritan' or not.

³⁵⁷ James Nayler, *A Discoverie of the First Wisdom Arising From Beneath*, (1653).

'Creature', but only to the Creator, and traditional social conventions such as greetings, the return of greetings, the doffing of hats and the bidding of farewells were all forbidden to them. This stance led to much confrontation, especially with those who considered themselves their social superiors. This lack of politeness, of deference, is the first and most visible sign of the Quaker attitude, and it is carried over into a severe, uncompromising and confrontational stance in relation to 'forms' and ritual in general. Quakers enact a deliberate and concerted campaign against the remnant of the State Church, habitually invading Parish churches and engaging their Ministers in dispute.

Fox's oft-repeated injunction that Quakers should let their words be few should have some impact on Quaker writing, but it is not immediately clear that such a voluminous production of tracts over the period 1653-1663 can be reconciled with it. What Quakers reject is unnecessary speech, idle chatter, mere socialising, performance, over-complication of expression. It has frequently been noted that the Puritan train of thought rejects the aestheticisation of communication, and Quakers hold the extreme position in this regard, rejecting all entertainment and all ritual, all convention and all elaboration. Nevertheless, their writings display a character only definable as 'style', and are expressed in a form which holds to principles we can see as aesthetic, chief among which must be the communicative purpose, the transmission of a severe and uncompromising vision of 'truth'. Equally important to the Quaker message is the framework laid down for religious discourse by successive translations of the Bible. The chief stylistic model for Quaker writing is scriptural, and Quaker texts exist in a close intertextual relationship with the King James Bible, assuming this 'voice' as the mark of their authority.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Lilburne's Quaker tract *The Resurrection of* conforms tightly to the discursive requirements of the new Quaker mode by compiling a compendium of scriptural references from which his text is constructed.

The early tracts combine attacks on the earthly powers and the customary forms of worship with appeals to the spirit of God in man. Quaker theology declares that the truth is directly perceptible to the individual through the activity of the seed, light, witness or spirit within: 'he that believeth hath the witness within himself'³⁵⁹, and needs no interpretation by the 'creature', (which is to say any intermediary intellectual or bodily human agency, internal or external.) I take this to mean that the 'witness', although within the individual, is and remains supra-personal. Such an insistence on the direct apprehension of truth extends to a third level of isolation and individuation the Lutheran and Calvinist rejection of the authority of the Church of Rome and the mediation of Priest between God and Man, also participating in, even concluding, the long-running upward trajectory of personal Bible-study, a trend which had intensified in England since the first vernacular translations had become available, despite the clear uncertainties of government.³⁶⁰ I say 'even concluding', because Quakers use the Bible as a road-map of spiritual development, internalising Biblical events and symbols and interpreting their spiritual experiences in terms of them. Although the anxieties of authority were partially addressed in the 'Authorised' version of 1611, it nevertheless seems to have been the text used by Quakers in their own study, and thus to have supported them in their unorthodoxy.

The King James Bible is the single most important literary and doctrinal source for Nayler's incantatory prose, although there are points of vocabulary and

³⁵⁹ Nayler, *The Power and Glory of the Lord*, (1653), p.9.

³⁶⁰ Such doubts are embodied in the Act of State of 1546 that 'No labouring men or women should read to themselves publicly or privately any part of the Bible, under pain of imprisonment', and the successive suppressions of the Tyndale, Coverdale and Matthew vernacular translations. See *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, (ed.) S.L.Greenslade, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1963), in particular Ch.IV, 'English Versions of the Bible: A.D. 1525-1611, pp.141-174.

conceptualisation which are reminiscent of Leveller and especially Digger writings and the 'theosophism' of Jacob Boehme. Digger and Leveller Tracts share with the Quakers common references which remind us that Quakers were seen as subversive and threatening in their early years. Political suppression of the Levellers and Diggers led former adherents of their cause to become Quakers³⁶¹. Quakerism can thus be seen as a turning within, away from direct political action in the face of overwhelming force, but Nayler still expresses enough dislike of injustice and distrust of powerful elites to make one feel that Quakers were not as 'quietist' as all that. Linguistic, aesthetic and ideological similarities with Quakers are apparent in the following quotation from a Leveller pamphlet.

the things we promote, are not good only in appearance, but sensibly so: not moulded nor contrived by the subtill or politick Principles of the World, but plainly produced and nakedly sent, without any insinuating arts, relying wholly upon the apparent and universal beleefe they carry in themselves.

(William Walwyn, *A Manifestation*)³⁶²

Leveller (and Quaker) prose in this formulation advances a 'negative aesthetic', an aesthetic of absence, an aesthetic which defines itself in contrast to the insinuating art of rhetoric.

Nayler's long sentences, each encompassing a whole area of his argument, use both stylistic and direct textual borrowings from a variety of books in the Bible, in particular there are echoes of the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah in the (earliest) tract *The Power and Glory of the Lord Shining Out of the North*. Nayler can also work up

³⁶¹ Lilburne is the best-known example. It is also thought by some that Gerrard Winstanley became a Quaker, Edward Burrough reports him as having attended Quaker meetings in London in 1654. See Douglas Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, Pendle Hill, Wallingford PA, (2000), p.247. A different assessment of the evidence is found in Andrew Bradstock, *Faith in the Revolution: The Political Theologies of Muntzer and Winstanley*, SPCK, (1997), pp.79-81.

³⁶² In Taft, pp.339-340. Also in Don M. Wolfe, *Leveller Manifestos of the Puritan Revolution*, p.392.

something of the atmosphere of the 'Book of Revelations', a consistently mysterious document describing the coming Apocalypse which seems to have informed the attitude of mind of many of the radical Protestant extremists of the time, as in this passage from *A Discoverie of the First Wisdom Arising from Below* :

But woe unto thee and thy Kingdom, for the day of thy torment is upon thee: for now Michael our Prince, who stands up for the children and people of God, is arisen against thee, who will break thee and thy image in pieces, and thou shalt be cast out of heaven, and thy Angels into the earth, and thou shalt be chained in the bottomlesse pit, and shalt deceive the nations no more; for thou art discovered, and the Beast and the false Prophet, by whom thou hast maintained Wars against the Saints, and you shall be cast into the lake that burneth, there to be tormented forever.

(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.17)

Quotations from Nayler need to be long, as his sentences and arguments are built clause by clause, rarely surrendering to a full-stop, and often allowing only a semi-colon where a natural break might seem to be at hand. These rolling cadences seem to have their origin in preaching; Nayler preached as a member of the New Model Army and had been a member of an Independent congregation near his farm in Yorkshire. Nayler employs with considerable skill a range of repetitions, substitutions and elisions in arguments usually based on binary oppositions. Fox's injunction to 'let your words be few' does not seem to daunt him in the least, but perhaps it should be quoted more fully in this context, as 'let your words be few and savoury'. The dictum is concerned with the suppression of what was seen as 'idle chatter', small-talk and mere socialising, a factor in the socialisation of the individual for which Fox expressed the greatest distrust, viewing it as a temptation into the common fellowship of the Creature, and thus a turning away from God. Thus words of admonition, of moral reproof, of edification and of disputation were not generally in short supply, and Nayler's words were aimed squarely at such

targets. Perhaps in view of the Quaker belief that the truth is to be found within, Nayler spends more time addressing those he regards as guilty of plain error than in uplifting the spirit in these early works. Of course, the Man of Sin, the servant of Antichrist and the Serpent are not likely to read such tracts, or to be converted if they do, and attacks on the proud and powerful are most likely to find an audience among the poor and dispossessed.

therefore take heed, you that tread the poor and helplesse under your feet, repent repent, your day is coming on apace, wherein the Lord will revenge the poor upon him that is too strong for him, and how can thou stand at the day, when thou shalt become weak, as another man, and no false pretences will be accepted, thou must be judged according to thy works good or evil, Oh that you had hearts to humble yourselves before the Lord, that ye might find mercy on that day, for why will you perish through your own will?³⁶³
(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.22)

For all his anger at injustice, Nayler seems to find some pity for the condition of the powerful here too. Whether such a day of reckoning is to be on the Earth in life or in Heaven after death is left unclear, and the Millenarianism of the times will not have convinced all readers that this is not a call to arms.

The chief targets of *The First Wisdom* and *The Power and Glory* are the professional Priesthood (hypocrites and Serpents) and thus the State Church, and proud and powerful earthly rulers.

all you must passe through the fire, and all your dross and tin must be consumed, your high looks, and great swelling words will be found drosse, and is for the fire.³⁶⁴
(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.19)

³⁶³ The shift of pronouns from 'you' to 'thou' during this passage sharpens the focus from the plural and general to the singular and personal; Quakers habitually avoid the more formal 'you' in talking to one individual.

³⁶⁴ The use of the symbolic element of purification 'fire' here reminds one of Coppe and Jacob Boehme as well as the Bible. Boehme's hermetic Cabbalism employs 'fire' as the purifying stage which leads to 'light', another key Quaker term.

There are other targets as well, however, which would seem more conventional to us now in contemporary 'hellfire' preaching and which hold less pointed political connotations; those who

rise up early to pursue strong drink, and continue until night, till wine inflame them: The woe is upon you that put the cup to his neighbours mouth, to make him drink that his nakednesse may appear, and shameful spewing cover him, and this is your glory, which is your shame, and you tell your companions
(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.24)³⁶⁵

wo, wo to all of them who profess the truth, and live in unrighteousness
(*First Wisdom*, p.22)

you wanton ones, making yourselves merry in your sins, your idle and profane talking and foolish jesting, your unclean filthy words are an abomination to the Lord, and every idle word must be accounted for, your reveling and rioting, carding and dicing, and all your invented sports,...which is Idolatry
(*First Wisdom*, p.25)

The spectre of Ranterism is also raised and unequivocally condemned.

by applying the promisses of the righteous to the wicked, encourageth them to live without fear; and this doctrine thou broadcast among thy Ranting crew, and so proclaims liberty to the lusts of the flesh, a Doctrine well pleasing to the first birth, and therefore so easily received, and cried up by many in these dayes.
(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.16)

Quakers were nothing if not serious, indeed weighty people. Theirs was no revolution into libertinism, their Puritanism ran very deep, and many endured hardships for the freedom to endure hardship. Besides these familiar targets, the full force of Nayler's condemnation is laid upon those who hold economic power over the simple man:

³⁶⁵ Habukkuk, 2.15-16. Also Rev.3.18.

God is against you, you covetous cruell
oppressors, who grind the faces of the poor and
needy, taking your advantage over the
necessities of the poor, falsifying the
measures, and using deceitful weights, speaking
that by your Commodities which is not true, and
so deceiving the simple, and hereby getting
great estates in the world, laying house to
house, and land to land, till there be no place
for the poor, and when they are become poor
through your deceits, then yon [you] despise
them, and exalts yourself above them, and
forgets that you are all made of one mould, and
one blood, and must all appear before one judge,
who is no respecter of persons.

(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.25)

Nayler advances what might be called a psychological theory of evil in the next passage, suggesting that the clever man's inability to penetrate the mysteries of the spirit leads him to seek to revenge himself on God and his fellow men by decrying the voice of the spirit wherever it is heard. The description of the uses and extent of earthly wisdom is damning and detailed, a portrait of venality, corrupt practices and essential pettiness.

Woe unto you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight, you that think to understand the spiritual things of God by your carnall wisdom; and because God will not reveal his secrets to your serpentine wisdom, therefore you speak evil of it where it is revealed, though you know it not; your wisdom is of the earth, and fadeth upon dust, and dust is the Serpents meat: by your wisdom you can over-reach your bretheren, by it you can go to Law and begger your poor bretheren for trifles, to fulfill your own wills, by it you can deceive the simple and harmless man, and make him your laughing-stock when you have done, by it you can contrive mischief on your bed, and when morning is come you put in practice against those you envy.

(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, p.27)

Nayler makes clear here a distrust of the educated and propertied elite. To discuss this passage on earthly wisdom a little more fully, the 'serpent' who figures as the motif is the creature which tempted Eve to taste the fruit in Genesis. God cursed the serpent that it should crawl on its

belly in the dust. This serpent is also invoked in discussions of Biblical interpretation by the professional Clergy, and references to 'bruised heads' which appear elsewhere in Nayler relate to the same curse. The little connecting passage 'your wisdom is of the earth, and fadeth³⁶⁶ upon dust, and dust is the Serpents meat' serve to link the serpent and mortality, earthly wisdom and earthly impermanence, implying that the earthly intelligence amounts to no more than a mouthful of dust. The long final section after the colon hinges on an incantatory repetition in which the uses of the earthly intelligence are enumerated, divided into four sections by the use of an introductory 'by' to give the appearance of a structured list. These uses, 'over-reach your bretheren', 'oppress the poor to get riches', 'make yourselves great in the earth', 'Lord it over your bretheren', 'go to Law and begger [sic] your poor bretheren for trifles,' 'fulfill your own wills', 'deceive the simple and harmless man' all stress an essential community and equality of people, who are 'bretheren', and thus emphasise the inequality and corruption of economic power relations. The final clauses 'by it you can contrive mischief on your bed, and when morning is come put [it] in practice against those you envy' stress the solitary, sinister character of the exploiter, who can create mischief from his imagination, and by bringing the dark imaginings of the night into 'practice' in the morning³⁶⁷ goes against light, God and fellowship with humanity. Such activities are an offence both against natural community (which is otherwise often decried and distrusted by Quakers) and, as can be seen from the following passage, against the Law of God.

devising and plotting to get riches right or wrong, so that now you can but keep within the compasse of the Laws of the nation, never regarding to be guided by that pure Law of God within, written in the heart, which would lead you in all things to do as you would be done by.
(Nayler, *First Wisdom*, pp.28-29)

³⁶⁶ Possibly 'feedeth'.

³⁶⁷ 'He deviseth mischief upon his bed.' Psalm 36.4.

This passage invokes a contrast and opposition between two 'Laws', the nation's and God's, of which God's is the primary and eternal, and is ignored. The laws of the nation clearly fall short in Nayler's estimation of the 'pure Law', the simplicity of which is profound. The sentiments, if not the expression, are similar to those of both Walwyn and Coppe. The binary structures of Nayler's prose constantly throw up such oppositions, reinforcements and contrasts; 'devising and plotting', 'right or wrong', 'Laws of the nation'/'pure law of God'. This binary structural device is augmented by the use of repeated phrases with lexical alterations, as in the passage from page twenty-five above: 'one mould/one blood/one judge'³⁶⁸ and again, 'faces of the poor/necessities of the poor/place for the poor'.

The clear social/political concern of these passages gives some indication of the attraction Quakerism had for disheartened Levellers, but the usual stress is on the binary oppositions of 'light/darkness', 'naturall/spiritual', 'good/evil', and Quakers withdrew from political involvement into spiritual quietism and pacifism as the cultural milieu hardened against them, and egalitarian ideals were first sidestepped by Cromwell and then quashed by the Restoration.

Apart from the social and political connotations of his beliefs, Nayler also addresses the question of Biblical interpretation in a typically Quaker manner. Biblical exegesis is surely the pre-eminent example of textual scholarship, preceding and informing the practice of literary criticism.

And this light is not a Chapter without you, in
a Book, but it is that light that revealed that
to the Saints in their several measures, which

³⁶⁸ A 'tripartite list', much beloved of orators throughout the ages, a device which is said to give a psychological impression of completeness, of finality, as in 'this, that and the other', including all possibilities.

they spoke forth, and which thou readest in the Chapter; and this light being minded will lead to the perfect day, which declares all things as they are.

(Nayler, *The Power and The Glory*, p.2)

Nayler's attitude is clear; he distrusts the study of the revealed word by the exercise of 'earthly', 'Serpentine', or 'carnall' wisdom. The Book is a vehicle for the expression of the light, and the important part of this is the revelation of the spirit, not the form in which it is recorded. This spirit, the Quakers claim, remains available to man in the present era, it is not historical, nor confined geographically to the Middle East, it is eternal and ever-present, being in fact the Spirit of Christ within man.

are you in your duty as servants to Christ, when you are prescribing him ways to walk by in his Church? And is it not so, when you would limit him to speak only by such as you in your wisdom approve of, or else he shall be silent? and to effect this are all the powers of the earth combined together; do not you here take upon you to be Lords of the vineyard, and not servants, and would not suffer him to send forth Labourers into it, who is Lord of it? Is this not the way to make the heritage your own? hath not all the persecution of the messengers of God arisen from this ground? And how many times have earthly prayers been broken to pieces against this rock?

(Nayler, *The Power*, pp.4-5)

There is a clear sense here that the State Church has hijacked or appropriated the Word of God for its own use, denying the essential spirit. The practice of control over the interpretation of the Bible is repeatedly attacked, and the relationship of Christ to the Pharisees is invoked as a comparison, His new message (or fulfilment of the old message) having met with similar resistance in his own lifetime. Accusations of the appropriation of language will be made against the Quakers in turn³⁶⁹. The Apostles are also invoked as exemplars of the tradition in which Quakers see

³⁶⁹ See 'Baxter vs. Nayler', below, pp.284-341.

themselves. The Quakers see the Bible as a template for earthly life in the present, they identify themselves with Biblical protagonists and attempt to emulate the Apostles. It is the seriousness and immediacy with which they interpret Christ's message which offends and threatens the remnant of the Established Church, they wish Christ's injunctions to be fulfilled in life, and are not content to be told that perfection is not attainable in the fallen world. Nayler's conviction of human perfectibility may account for his eventual victimisation; the literal imitation of Christ was perceived as blasphemous by his opponents, chief among them Calvinists whose own theology distances God's mysterious will from the individual so firmly that the 'election' of those pre-ordained to be saved is unknowable, final and unalterable.

By page five of *The Power and the Glory*, Nayler proposes the classic binary opposition of two spirits (good/evil, light/darkness) and on page six employs powerful irony, even sarcasm, bringing Biblical precedent to bear on those who defend orthodoxy against revelation.

and now try whether that Spirit act in you, which led the Apostles and Saints into the temple and Synagogues, there to dispute against all Idolatrous worships, and to hold out to the people the true substance, and thereby gathered the Church into God, in the Spirit, there to meet and worship; or that Spirit that was in them who persecuted the Saints for so doing, and commanded them silence, and charged them with breaking their Law, and turning the world upside down, and counted them mad men: And if any be moved to speak a word of truth while your Parish Teachers are talking, or before their glass be run, you that execute a carnal Law upon the bodies of such, are you subject to the Kingdom of Christ, which is in the Spirits of his own, whereby he rules the conscience, and brings them to obey his commands ?

(Nayler, *The Power*, p.6)

The same rhetorical figures were used by Lutherans and Calvinists in their attacks on the formalism and corruption

of the Roman Church. To have the tables thus turned on them by this new cult must have outraged them, who had, under Laud, thought of themselves as crying out in the wilderness against the corruption of religion.

The subject of textual criticism is again picked up on page seven.

but what rule walk you by, who must have them to such a pitch of Learning, and so many years at Oxford and Cambridge, and then to study so long in Books and old Authors ? and all this is to know what unlearned men, Fisher-men, Plow-men and Herds-men did mean when they spoke the Scriptures, who were counted fools and madmen by the learned generation when they spoke it forth; And they who speak it by the same Spirit, are so still by the same Serpents wisdom; And when you have brought them to this height of Learning, yet the Scripture is a book sealed to all their wisdom and learning: and they from whom you expect the opening of this mysterie are at a jar amongst themselves, what should be the meaning of it; and have been in all ages disputing, quarrelling, imprisoning, killing and burning one another, and would do so now, had they the power, for this learned generation have been the stirrers up of all strife and bloodshed, setting Kingdoms, Nations and People one against the other, and all about standing to uphold their Meanings, Forms and Imaginations and vain conceptions from the Letter, but are all ignorant of that Spirit which gave it forth
(Nayler, *The Power*, pp.7-8)

for the Spirit is the Original, which first reveals the mysterie to the Spirit in man, and then declares it forth in words or writing to the understanding of others, to the directing of their minds to wait upon God for the same free-gift of the Spirit, and here is the true worship of the Spirit found and performed, which stands in the teaching of the Spirit, and not in the Letter

(Nayler, *The Power*, p.8)

It is not 'learning' but understanding which is required for proper interpretation. The opposition between Spirit and Letter is firmly established. The practice of the Apostles is contrasted with the formal worship of the contemporary

Church, the controversy over which 'forms' is exemplified by a tripartite arrangement of carnalities:

And they having outwardly declared their inward worship and fellowship they had with the God in Spirit, and this you find in the Letter, and every one according to your several conceivings thereof, sets up an outward form, image or likeness of the Saints worship, and here you worship, and for this you contend by reasons and arguments, and wrest the Scriptures to uphold your form; and if any will not worship your Image, you are greatly offended; and here is all the contention in the world about things without, as forms, customs and traditions; and here carnal minds contend with carnal words and weapons about carnal things

(Nayler, *The Power*, pp.8-9)

Nayler seems quite innocent of the knowledge that he is himself implicated in just such disputes over doctrines and forms of worship, effortlessly placing himself outside such carnality by stepping into the realm of the Spirit. The Quaker habit of dealing in such binary absolutism is moderated only by an insistence on the individual conscience as the arbiter of truth.

Entering what had long been one such heated doctrinal dispute, Nayler dismisses infant baptism as the mere 'sprinkling of Infants' (*The Power*, pp.8-9) and the 'Church of Christ' of his opponents as 'the limbs of the devil' (p.10).

Nayler's passionate commitment to the imitation of Christ in the world and the body is made clear in this passage.

God will not be mocked, you hypocrites, be not sayers, but doers.....Do ye seek to be perfect ? for God is perfect; holy as he is holy ? Do ye love God above all, and your neighbours as yourself, when you make them your footstool ? do you to all as you would be done by; have you forsaken the world and the love of it ? Is the lusts and affections of your flesh crucified ? Having food and rayment are ye therewith content ? Do you live by faith, not taking thought for the morrow, not what to eat and what to put on ? Do you live as the Lords Lillies? Do you feed

the hungry and clothe the naked and let the oppressed go free ? Are you no respecters of persons in all your dealings ? Are you brought to yea and nay in all your communication, without any more which comes of evil ? Do you suffer and are hated, and have all manner of evil spoken on you falsely for the name of Christ ?

(The Power, p.11)

The insistent (and accusatory) rhetorical questions point up again and again the conflicts between Christ's teaching and the behaviour of the professional clergy. Quaker practice has sought to imitate the example or instruction of Christ on all these issues. In the Quaker view these are the signs by which the Godly are known, and yet is this not itself doctrinal disputation supported by study of the Letter? An inherent difficulty in Quaker theology comes to notice at this point; are the godly to follow the promptings of the Spirit even when they run counter to the Letter? Such multiple validation for what must be one truth presents a real problem. While Quakers might state that there can be no essential dispute between the word of God and the Spirit of God within, not all those who believed in the power of individual revelation found this to be so. Different individuals, and different groups, receive differing messages from their Spirits. The 'Ranters', and antinomians of any persuasion also adhered to the primacy of the 'inner light'. Just such a problem in concrete and personal form was to confront Nayler in his relationship to Fox and the Quaker movement in general within three years.

Christ is unconstrained by, and opposed to all 'forms', he is the ultimate iconoclast:

and he that is without form shall by his power, break all your Forms and formal Worships in pieces, and that worship alone shall be set up, which is in spirit, and not in form, and is accepted by that God who was never known in form, but in spirit, blessed for ever.

(The Power, p.11)

It is only the Quakers themselves who emulate the behaviour of the Apostles, and are thus aligned with the spirit of

God, a fact both proved by and required for the performance of one's duty to God.

first plant, and then eat; And this was the practice of such as Christ sent, and he always provided them a house to go to who were worthy, and meat to eat, and they never wanted what was good for them; and I witness that he is the same now, and has the same care over those that he sends into the world, with divers others whom he hath sent out without bag or scrip, yea, into the most brutish parts of the Nation; praises, praises be unto our God, whose is the earth and the fullness thereof; and thus do we witness the Scripture fulfilled, and take no thought for food and rayment as the heathen do, but are come into unity with all the Saints in their joy and sufferings, and are taught by Christ how to want and how to abound, and in all conditions to be content; and we can truly say all is good to us, and to the Church of Christ. And our Kingdom and joy is not of this world, nor doth the world know us, nor our joy; glory to the highest forever, who is shaking all the wisdoms and powers of men, to establish that which is of himself alone, to which all shall be made to bend and bow.

(The Power, p.14)

Such ecstatic pronouncements approach 'Ranter' territory, ('all is good' is an antinomian watchword of the time), and it certainly sounds as if Nayler associates himself and his fellow Quakers very closely with the Apostles. The threat to authority is quite clear, and although the motivation is imputed to God, it is Nayler and his Friends who are the instruments of it. An inherent dichotomy between God 'whose is the earth and the fruits thereof' and the God whose Kingdom 'is not of this world' is ignored, adding to the impression that Quakers are not clear about whether the Kingdom of God is at hand on this earth in this age, or whether the Saints' reward is purely spiritual. Indeed, it is even possible that Nayler draws little distinction between the two, his doctrine of the perfectibility of man being so deep-rooted.³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ Also in play here is the Millenarian conviction that the 'last days' before the Apocalypse are imminent, or even current.

I do not wish to dwell on the ambiguities of Quaker theology, however. Considerable oratorical power is garnered through repetition and substitution, the incantatory quality of Nayler's prose gives the impression of an irresistible tide of arguments rising to swamp all opposition. The imagery is drawn from a mixture of contemporary experience and Biblical precedent, a mixture which in itself has powerful thematic importance. Biblical influences predominate in his style. The symbolic phrases, images and metaphors are marked by:

- a) exophoric (outside) reference to Biblical prestige, invoking the simultaneously condemned powers of the 'Letter' and the Priesthood,
- b) largely interchangeable significance within two strictly opposed classes denoting approval (seed, light, truth, Christ etc.) and disapproval (Antichrist, darkness, serpent, devil, hypocrite, etc.),
- c) wide application over a number of seemingly disparate fields,
- d) the ability to reify approved or disapproved individuals, types, attitudes or practices as projections or examples of eternal and superhuman forces.

Nayler's extended sentences, with their measured and rhythmic clausal structure, create the sensation of an unarguable force. That his critique of contemporary society advances on so many fronts adds to this feeling. In terms of subject positioning, his discourse pushes the reader to seemingly extreme positions, yet Quakerism succeeded (perhaps through its protean ambiguities) in converting at least temporarily a surprisingly large number of people in different parts of the country³⁷¹. In general Nayler follows

³⁷¹ See Reay, *The Quakers in the English Revolution*, who gives a high estimate of 60,000.

a logical path to the annihilation of his opponent through an excess of condemnation, stacking up argument upon argument and example upon example, (indeed, clause upon clause), and drawing the contemporary problems of his own society into a close and searching comparison with the Palestine of Jesus' time. Assertions of human perfectibility, combined with denunciations of professional Priests, prevailing economic relations and customary duties, the last bases, as many saw it, for the preservation of Church, State, Law and Property were delivered with sufficient rhetorical power for many in Parliament to feel later that he represented an ideal target for a cruel and exemplary punishment.

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A DISCOVERIE OF FAITH

By way of comparison, or confirmation, I now turn to the interesting and unusual 'Epistle' from the very early tract *A Discoverie of Faith* (1653), which may be the first of all Quaker publications. Written by Richard Farnsworth, it is printed with 'A Letter of James Nayler to Severall Friends about Wakefield'³⁷².

³⁷²Richard Farnsworth was one of the earliest to be 'convinced' by George Fox. Born sometime around 1630 in Tickhill, near Doncaster, he inherited a small farm; a fairly typical condition among the early Quakers. He followed a familiar trajectory, withdrawing from his Parish Church and engaging with John Saltmarsh's 'Seeker' antinomianism. He had corresponded with Fox during the latter's imprisonment in Derby (October 1650-October 1651), and may have suggested he travelled north. Fox met Farnsworth at Balby, and next Nayler, Thomas Goodaire and William Dewsbury at the house of a Lieutenant Roper. Farnsworth's *A Discoverie of Faith* may be the first of what was soon a torrent of Quaker publications. Farnsworth wrote some forty-nine pamphlets in fifteen years of Quaker activism. He travelled widely, attacking both Clergy and Ranters, engaging with Rice Jones in Nottingham, and Jacob Bauthumley in Leicester in 1654. A general meeting of Quakers at Swannington, Leicestershire, (January 1655) held debates with both Baptists and Ranters. He published *The Ranters Principles and Deceits Discovered* early in 1655. He also tackled Richard Baxter, both sending him 'queries' (perhaps among the 'five severall papers' Nayler mentions in *An Answer to a Book* (1655)), and (with Thomas Goodaire) interrupting a service by Baxter's deputy Richard Sergeant on the twenty-fifth of March 1655. In May 1666, during one of Fox's imprisonments, Farnsworth took the lead in imposing discipline on an inchoate movement, enforcing a structure of monthly meetings derived from Baptist practice, which was designed to subject the inner light to the judgement of the meeting. Shortly after, he died of a fever. Douglas Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford PA, (2000), p.221. Further information on Farnsworth (often

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The body of the text is heavily annotated with marginal Biblical references, and resembles a patchwork of Biblical quotation. This is not consistent throughout, and the 'Epistle' has no marginal notes and no references. The text proper contains a stock of startling verbal images, most of which, on examination, result from typically seventeenth-century Radical Puritan phraseology and derive from Biblical sources. Thus 'who hath faith now denies all the blind Priests, who are types of nothing,' (section one, page eight) or 'and now thou scarlet coloured harlot that is covered, mincing with thy eyes, and tinckling with thy feet, and thy broidered hair' (section one, page six; ref. Isa. 3.16.). It is written in the mystical register of early Quakerism, employing the biblically derived 'Gnostic' parable of the 'husk', the 'Behmenist' (or Joachite) doctrine of the two seeds, (Cain/Abel, dark/light, seed/chaff, Christ/Serpent, etc/etc.), and typological interpretation, as in the 'types of nothing' above. These are all common, if not universal features of Radical Puritan discourse. Anabaptist and Behmenist influence seem quite widespread in the early movement (Isaac Penington at least displays knowledge of Boehme, and the stress on internal revelation is universal among Quakers). The 'two seeds' myth is treated in depth in Nayler's *A Discoverie of the First Wisdom*, and in very similar terms. As the author of the text has striven for a collective, even supra-human voice and is close to the vocabulary and phraseology of the Bible, I assume that the writer himself would wish to ascribe it to the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

One explanation of Quaker style is to be found in their social position. The words of those without formal education, of labouring men and small farmers, of those professionally unconnected to Church or Court, had rarely been published before the breakdown of central licensing

Farnworth) in *D.N.B.*, Vol.6, p.1084; Geoffrey Nuttall, 'Notes on Richard Farnworth', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 48, pp.79-84; Greaves and Zaller, Vol.1, pp.269-270; Tam Llewellyn-Edwards, 'Richard Farnworth of Tickhill', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 56 (1992), pp.201-209. Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, p.314.

during the Civil War period, just as the opinions of religious dissidents had been rigorously suppressed. Historians rely on written evidence for their studies of social attitudes, and this reliance concentrates study on the social attitudes of the elite, the only people who had the leisure to write and the means to preserve their writings. It is often claimed that illiteracy was common, if not universal, among the lower strata of society in this period, but such assumptions are impossible to verify, and the evidence of the Civil War and Commonwealth periods seems to contradict them³⁷³. Where and how such figures as James Nayler and Richard Farnsworth came to learn to write is not known, but it was certainly not through the Universities, and his style seems to derive from two related sources; the Bible, which provides most of the imagery and virtually all reference in Quaker writing, and the oral tradition of preaching, a mode of speech which Nayler at least had already practised in the New Model Army before conversion to Quakerism led him to prison, and to writing, in 1652/3.

Although Quakers wish to place themselves outside the norms of contemporary culture, I doubt that this is ever really possible, and the influence of the King James Bible may prove the point. Just as Nayler attacks the interpretative efforts of Priests³⁷⁴, he incorporates the efforts of generations of textual scholars into his own work through the familiar tropes and cadences of Biblical language. No revolution can entirely erase the assumptions on which it was based, and the positions of revolutionaries are transformations rather than eradications of traditions. The Quaker Revolution - and revelation - is predicated on a return to the 'spirit' of Apostolic Christianity, and a rejection of the temporising and complexities of theological discourse, long heavily freighted with the influence of central political authority.

³⁷³ Recent research, led by that of David Cressy, has suggested that rates of literacy were greater in the period than had previously been assumed. See *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1980).

³⁷⁴ See 'Nayler vs. Baxter', pp.284-341.

Seventeenth-century grammatical practices differ from our own. In certain modes, the verb may be positioned rather differently in the clause, as in 'Fashion not yourselves like unto', or 'neither be ye men pleasers'. It would be unwise to impose strict, ahistorical interpretations on such material. I also think 'state-of-being' constructions involving the verb 'to be', such as 'there is no life in them' or 'that doth arise' were more common in seventeenth century syntax than they are today. This would mean that a modern view, based on discourse analysis, which sees them as attempts to evade the depiction of activity and responsibility may not be sustainable.

Habits of punctuation have changed over the course of three hundred and fifty years, and it is often taken as a seventeenth-century practice to end sentences (or 'periods') with a semi-colon rather than a full-stop. However, Farnsworth uses the occasional full-stop when it seems necessary to him, rare as that is, and his semi-colons are often followed by a conjunction. There is an appreciable alteration of tone and effect concomitant upon the relative modernisation of Nayler's punctuation in George Whitehead's *Sundry Books* (1716), and it seems to me that his punctuation is an integral part of the organic flow of his writing, adding to his intended effect and making his vision seem whole, inclusive and all-encompassing. Quite what part the typographer / compositor has played in matters of punctuation is impossible to determine, given the lack of manuscript evidence.

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A Discoverie of Faith (1653) may be the first of all Quaker tracts. The Epistle opens with a stern admonition to proper reading which seeks to define the correct readership and reader position for the work.

Christian Friend.
This ensuing treatise was not written for swine
to snuffle upon, and so cast dirt upon it with

their dirty noses, but from the flowings of love to tender desires, that they may minde what begets the desire to Righteousness, and so come out of all mens Words and Writings that doth arise out of the corrupt nature; for they are filthy and unclean, the heart of man being deceitful, and that above measure, and all words and writings that arise out of the first nature are corrupt and earthly, and there is no life in them, but for the dead minde that is carnal, which knoweth not the things of God, therefore do they not know those that are begotten to a lively faith in God, which purifieth their hearts, and worketh out the carnal part, that did delight in the unclean conversation of the world, in conforming to the customs and fashions of the world, in Capping and Cringing, Bending and Bowing to men of corrupt hearts, and unpure mindes, all being earthly and brutish, following the imaginations of their hearts; idolizing the creatures, falling down to worship men more then God, fearing to displease men of Corrupt hearts, and unclean conversation, for some self end or other, not regarding the command of Jesus Christ, who saith Fashion not your selves like unto the world, for the fashion of the world passeth away, & again saith he be not conformed like unto the world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your minds; neither be ye men pleasers, for he that is a man pleaser, he is no longer the servant of Jesus Christ, who did not seek to please men, but did the wil of his father, in reprovng sin & evil, and testifying against the deceits of the world, and that was the reason why he was hated of the world, not for any evil, but because saith he, I testifie against the world, that the deeds thereof are evil, therefore do the world hate me;

(Richard Farnsworth, 'Epistle' to *A Discoverie of Faith*, p.3)

Quaker style, characterised by long sentences full of supplementary and dependent clauses, has the cadence of preaching rather than Court and University language. But this is not the 'plain style' of the 'ordinary working man'. 'This ensuing treatise' (for example) is surely not the speech of tavern or field. It discloses a certain self-consciousness about the task of writing for publication, an attempt to find phraseology suitable for printing. Quakers often seem educated 'above their station', and this is indicative of one of the wellsprings of the religious and social discontent into which they were to tap; the fact that there were many lucid, intelligent, literate, able, informally educated people in Carolinian and revolutionary

England who were unable to advance socially, to express their views publicly, or to find a role which rewarded their abilities.

Not only do Quakers write from such a position, but they are confident they will find a readership which shares it. While the reception of such Tracts cannot be gauged from this range, the proliferation of Quaker Tracts - and Tracts against Quakers - over the next few years indicates that their penetration was considerable, and that they evoked a variety of responses from enthusiasm to outrage.

Farnsworth's concern in his 'Epistle' is that the reader should distinguish between writings which spring from the spirit of God and those that conversely arise from the 'corrupt nature', the 'carnal part', the 'dead minde', etc. This is typically dichotomous of him - Nayler too seems to think that there are only these two possibilities; all entertainment, idle talk, social exchange are part of the Serpent's work.

Even this early, Quakers associate the righteous with the persecuted. There is little in this writing to suggest the later successes of Quaker businessmen, successes which fit well with Calvinistic assumptions about material rewards being signs of God's favour³⁷⁵. On the contrary, Quakers expect (and receive) persecution from the earthly powers as a result of their faith.

but he that departs from iniquity, makes himself
a prey;

(*A Discoverie of Faith*, 'Epistle', p.4)

By the time we have reached the end of the passage we have almost certainly forgotten the beginning. The original proposition seems to have been lost under the weight of supporting evidence. This is not a matter of incoherence, Farnsworth is dealing in thought that moves almost as a matter of course from a statement about the world as it is now to the world of the Bible. This is a moving line, a mode

³⁷⁵ This theory seems to have been formulated by Max Weber in 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', but has its roots in

of thought quite different from the logical marshalling of propositions. Quaker writing has an organic flow which carries the reader forward with it, and in which all things are connected. They are all connected to this textual view - world as metaphor. Everything reveals, confirms, expresses, Biblical truth. The language is highly repetitious and rhythmical, carrying something of the force of incantation.

If we wish to take a dim view of this transcendental, Idealist attitude, we could describe it in terms derived from Freud as 'paranoid' or even 'psychotic'³⁷⁶. There are those who regard the more extreme Protestants of this era as proto-fascists (Norman Cohn), or as the precursors of terrorism (Michael Walzer). While both cases are arguable, it seems a trifle ahistorical to criticise the ideologies of the seventeenth century and before for a lack of democracy. For all the stern condemnatory judgements there is little sense that they wish to take power and compel others to act against their wills or consciences.

In any case, there were good reasons for paranoia in England in the 1650's, a period when there was no central authority regarded as legitimate by a convincing majority, Roman Catholics and Royalists represented a threat both real and imaginary, cloud formations (as after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales) were taken for signs, and reported in news-books, as were plagues of frogs³⁷⁷. The end of the world was declared to be imminent by various individuals and groups, some of whom took up arms in that belief. Quakers would not be alone in 'paranoia'. Cromwell had a large and active Secret Service co-ordinated by Secretary Thurloe, and was the target of several assassination plots. The Quaker search for a transcendent certainty may have one explanation here.

If the purpose of Quaker writing is to uproot the reader from habitual landmarks and habits of thought then

Calvin's doctrine of 'the elect', the divine pre-selection of those who are to be saved.

³⁷⁶ As with Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, p.5.

Farnsworth seems to have hit upon a method suited to the task. It is difficult to keep track, not so much of what is being said, but of what has been said³⁷⁸.

Where the first semi-colon falls (after 'corrupt nature') it seems to denote the beginning of an 'aside' which we might now enclose in brackets, or fence with dashes, or treat as a subsidiary clause, were it not for the fact that the focus continues to shift, and our attention is never returned to the starting point. Instead, the flow of his thought takes us from the local and specific ('this ensuing treatise') to the words of Christ.

The reference to 'swine' has a dual significance, firstly in the common association of pigs, dirt, and fleshly appetites,

³⁷⁷ See Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*.

³⁷⁸ In attempting to come to grips with the confusion generated within this text, I have been informed by Halliday's 'systemic' view of the production of meanings within language. (M.A.K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Edward Arnold, London, (1985), revised (1994)). While Halliday's is a structural analysis, he stresses the importance of the social and contextual elements of language use. Halliday's approach generates a vast amount of information, and such a wealth of data would prove quite unmanageable when considering a text of any length. In view of this, several authors have tried to select certain foci from Halliday's system and integrate them into a simplified framework of analysis with elements derived from other sources. See: Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, Polity Press, Cambridge, (1986). Ian Parker, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, Routledge, London, (1992). Raphael Salkie, *Text and Discourse Analysis*, Routledge, London, (1995). Malcolm Coulthard, (ed.) *Advances in Written Text Analysis*, Routledge, London, (1994). A Hallidean analysis interprets any clause as having three separate but interlinked semantic functions, addressed by means of three distinct 'subjects' of the clause in question. There is a certain slippage of terminology over the course of his work, but the three foci are based on the mood, transitivity and theme-rheme structures within the clause. These foci are interwoven within any language act, so that '...every utterance is both this and that.' M.A.K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, (p.45). Texts are both product (which can be analysed in systematic terms) and process, 'a continuous process of semantic choice, a movement through the network of meaning potential...'. M.A.K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, (p.10). Halliday is rightly insistent that function is a fundamental property of language. In traditional grammar, every clause is identified as 'having' a 'subject'. Norman Fairclough, (*Discourse and Social Change*), and Raphael Salkie, (*Text and Discourse Analysis*), discuss connectives as an aspect of 'cohesion' strategies in texts. Connectives control the way a story is told, the way an argument moves from point to point, and the way these points are made to seem significant and related to one another. Cohesion is also generated by the use of references, either textual or 'exophoric' (Halliday) - 'situational' (Salkie); by repetition, by the use of the same lexical item under a different definition, by avoidance of repetition through elision and substitution, and by the refiguring of key phrases. Also significant are 'tripartite lists', pervasive in political discourse, and different relationships between binary pairs of terms. There is a marked binary, polarised tone in the disputations and theologies examined below (see especially 'Nayler versus Baxter'), pp.284-341.

and secondly in 'casting pearls before swine'. This text is to be considered a pearl, implanting the notion in the readership that if they fail to appreciate it, they are such swine. The underlying opposition here is between the 'corrupt nature' of 'swine', and the divine 'flowings of love'.

The text goes on to support and expand the association of earthly forms with 'corruption'. 'Words and Writings' arising from 'the first nature', the heart of man, which is 'deceitful...without measure' are 'corrupt and earthly' and 'filthy and unclean'. It continues 'there is no life in them but for the dead minde which is carnal', reinforcing this view with the opposition 'life/dead', and the association of flesh with sin and death in the term 'carnal'. This 'dead minde' is then opposed to a 'lively faith', which, in line with the doctrine of human perfectibility purifies hearts, and 'worketh out the carnal part'.

Farnsworth then embarks on a description of this 'carnal part'. Again, it seems as though he is starting an 'aside', a supplementary section which might be in parentheses, and again we are to find that instead of being returned to our point of departure we are carried forward. The carnal part 'did delight' (perhaps in the use of the past tense there is some suggestion of an autobiographical, confessional element) 'in the unclean conversation' and 'customs and fashions' 'of the world'³⁷⁹. Quaker disapproval of the 'imagination' is invoked, the use here being equivalent to our 'fantasy'. People can trust neither the world nor their imaginations, not the mind (corrupt) or the heart (deceitful, and that beyond measure), and certainly not the accustomed social patterns and relationships which we describe as culture in the broadest sense. But what is the ground to which this analysis *does* appeal? Another semi-colon indicates not the closing of one parenthesis, but the opening of another, referring back to the 'imaginings of their hearts', which are then listed, being shameful acts of

self-abasement before the powerful. Quaker disapproval of these formal social behaviours, means of maintaining social relations, getting on in the world, acknowledging hierarchy and reducing social tension - mere politeness, in most views - is emphasised by the fact that the most visible sign of Quaker difference was their refusal to exchange greetings or farewells, raise their hats, use polite forms of address indicating deference, or swear oaths. They regarded all such 'face oriented' behaviour with contempt, even horror, and Quaker Francis Howgill ridicules the politenesses of Priests in his pamphlet 'The Dawnings of the Gospel Day'³⁸⁰. Other Christians set the boundaries of proper behaviour in a different place, as Nayler's disagreement with Baxter shows³⁸¹.

Farnsworth's essential intertextual reference is at last invoked: 'the command of Jesus Christ'. Two quotations are given as reports of Christ's speech 'who saith', '& again saith'. The second contains a phonologically linked pair in opposition; conformed/transformed. This passage is closed with a third semi-colon, after which Farnsworth exhorts his readers 'neither be ye men pleasers', and returns to the example of Christ. This passage re-affirms the connection of righteousness and persecution which is constant in Quaker writing.

The passage is difficult to follow, I think because of Farnsworth's habit of chaining clauses together without stopping. A high proportion of these clauses are appended without independent re-statement of a 'theme'. The first theme is a self-reference: 'this ensuing treatise' which survives until it shifts to 'Words and Writings', a contrasting category which derives from the next, the 'corrupt nature', refigured as 'the heart of man', 'the first nature'. While the theme of the Epistle, is an explanation of the 'ensuing treatise', the origin of the treatise is obscure, we are told by what it 'was not

³⁷⁹ The emphasis here is on the social world, rather than the natural, although 'naturall' is also a term of disapprobation for Quakers.

³⁸⁰ Francis Howgill, *The Davvnings of the Gospel-day*, (1676).

written'. Indeed, the text is portrayed as being produced out of 'the flowings of love' to the recipient 'tender desires', and no Author is acknowledged but 'love'.

Farnsworth's clauses succeed one another without the structure ever reaching a formal closure. If Farnsworth were to stop and explain, as it were, to narrate, saying something to the effect of 'this is desirable because', reframing his argument and re-orienting the reader, it would make reading the text easier, but it would also be an entirely different style, and one which would produce a different effect. The pattern seems to be that the object of the previous clause is taken up as the theme of the next, sometimes in breathless succession. Thematic units are long, for example 'mens Words and Writings that doth arise out of the carnal nature'.³⁸²

Farnsworth's syntactical structure is complex, often considered a feature of spoken, as opposed to written language. I take the repetitions, substitutions and refigurings to be indicative of oral patterns too. Farnsworth's text, which mentions only Christ as a person (in five instances) is 'about' the influence of abstract forces, of which people are no more than vessels or representatives.

This first section of Farnsworth's 'Epistle' is an attempt at self-definition of Quakers within and through the text which succeeds, insofar as it does, only through negatives. Like the 1970's adolescent social movement (or subculture) 'Punk', the text and Quakerism are defined by what they are

³⁸¹ See 'Nayler versus Baxter', below, pp.284-341.

³⁸² One way of looking at what is happening as the text is read is that Farnsworth repeats a pattern of 'given/new' information with a subsidiary explanatory or extension clause carried between these two 'ends' of the structure. The 'new' information at the end of the previous structure frequently serves as the 'given' portion of the next structure without further reference. Thus : 'This ensuing treatise was not written for swine to snuffle upon {and so cast dirt upon it with their dirty noses} but from the flowings of love to tender desires.....' can serve as one unit and '.....that <tender desires> might know what it is that begets the desire to Righteousness {and so come out of all mens Words and Writings that doth arise out of the carnal nature} for they are filthy.....' picks up 'tender desires' as its 'given' information, but this does not hold good, as 'Words and Writings' are clearly a theme of the Epistle.

not, and by what they are opposed to. Without wishing to labour the comparison it is also arguable that both react against the purely aesthetic; over-complication, ritual, indirectness, and use what they perceive as the 'spirit' of their field of endeavour as a critical weapon against those in positions of authority within it.

Farnsworth's deployment of the term 'arise' seems ambivalent. To arise is to perform an action, certainly, if we think in terms of an animal, but the image seems to describe something more like a log, or even a life-form, arising in a swamp, where the motive force derives more from the surrounding matter than the thing itself. The constructions involving 'arise', which vary little: 'that doth arise out of the corrupt nature / that arise out of the first nature' do not seem very strong in their attribution of motive force to either term. It is rather as though spontaneous generation were taking place, natural and inevitably corrupt. No people have yet been mentioned in the text, only spirits, or metaphors³⁸³, a manifestation of Quaker objectification, their unassailable hermeneutic. Thus 'swine' 'love' 'tender desires' 'words and writings' 'the heart of man' 'the dead minde', and so-on. 'Men of corrupt hearts' are five times the object of the active attentions of 'the carnal part', which despite all its activity is shown only in the most obsequious of positions, 'Capping and Cringing, Bending and Bowing', 'conforming', 'following', 'idolizing', 'falling down to worship', etc. In Christ alone do we find someone definitely saying something. The chief protagonists of this passage are Christ and the carnal part. It is also notable that a large number (ten) of these processes are negative constructions; 'do not know', 'is no life', 'was not written', etc.

The text is packed with negatively-weighted descriptive terms such as 'swine', 'dirt', 'dirty', 'corrupt', 'filthy and unclean' (as if mere filthiness would not be enough), 'deceitful', 'dead', and 'carnal', for example, and in

context both 'earthly' and 'natural' are rendered self-evidently negative. The choice of verbs too is calculated to denigrate the activities and participants described, as in 'Capping and Cringing, Bending and Bowing', 'idolizing', and 'falling down', all of which contrive to make the text's attitude to this behaviour perfectly clear.³⁸⁴

Farnsworth's argument is presented exclusively in the form of assertions, or 'averrals'. There is no sense of the Author saying 'I think', or 'I believe' this, statements are made as matters of fact. This is 'unmodulated', categorical modality. This categorical tone (also Biblical) lends itself to the quotation and creation of phrases that have a proverbial ring: 'but he that departs from iniquity makes himself a prey' (p.4), 'he that is a man pleaser, he is no longer a servant of Jesus Christ' (p.3) Either we believe this or we don't, there is no reasoning with such a tone. Of course, this is how texts are, we cannot dispute with the Author, who remains stubbornly absent. However, when reading we enter a dialogue of sorts with the text, anticipating its movement and responding to its attitudes. Any reading involves interpretation, but also a suspension of our own thoughts in deference to the voice of the text. If our thoughts, a marginal commentary, disagree too strongly with the author, or object to the tone of voice, reading may become impossible. Every act of reading is necessarily a drawing into sympathy with the concerns of the text. Not that I actually believe that texts 'have concerns', but authors do; and their concerns, preconceptions and attitudes are never far from the surface of the text.

Farnsworth employs many examples of oppositions, sometimes in phonologically linked pairs. The Quaker view is highly dichotomous, as expressed in 'not written for/but from', 'dead minde/lively faith', 'men/God',

³⁸³ Farnsworth uses metonymy in particular to symbolise general trends in human culture.

³⁸⁴ Certain types of verb imply particular states of affairs, these are known as 'factive' verbs, and I suggest that 'idolize' can be classed as one of these, its 'implicatures' defining the activity described as an act of false worship.

'conformed/transformed', 'man pleaser/servant of Jesus', but the majority of pairings are used as reinforcement; 'Words and Writings', 'corrupt and earthly', 'customs and fashions', 'Capping and Cringing, Bending and Bowing', 'corrupt hearts and unpure minds', 'Corrupt hearts, and unclean conversation', 'earthly and brutish', and the already noted 'filthy and unclean'. The use of phonological similarities in 'conformed/transformed' derives from the King James' Bible, but the alliteration of 'Capping and Cringing, Bending and Bowing' is Farnsworth's own³⁸⁵. In this instance it contrives to reduce the activities described to a clown-like foolishness.

Rhythm and repetition are important structural elements in Farnsworth's text. Repetition is often coupled with refiguring and substitution, as in 'men of corrupt hearts, and unpure mindes' and 'men of Corrupt hearts, and unclean conversation'; 'mens Words and Writings that doth arise out of the corrupt nature;' 'all words and writings that arise out of the first nature'³⁸⁶.

As we reach the end of the excerpt 'the world' becomes a significant structural element, featuring eight times, five being attributed to Christ. Apart from the repetition and substitution already noted, an important feature of the text is the long, sinuous and all-inclusive line of the argument, a thing difficult to explain or grasp. Long phrases are broken up by shorter appended clauses which serve to describe the topic in greater detail, or, perhaps more accurately, to reinforce judgements already made clear. This often means eliding the restatement of the theme, which leads to difficulty in deciding to what Farnsworth refers. This stylistic device retains rhythmical interest, adding to the hypnotic quality of the prose. I think particularly of the section 'that did delight in the unclean conversation.....the imaginations of their hearts;' but other passages follow a similar if imprecise pattern.

³⁸⁵ Naylor too employs alliteration to good effect.

³⁸⁶ Further evidence of a firm Quaker identification of corruption and the natural.

There are probably too many Biblical allusions for all but the most expert sensibility to detect. It is nearest the truth to say that Quaker vocabulary *is* that of the King James' Bible. It is easier to see where Farnsworth departs from this, rather than when he adheres to it. I take 'This ensuing treatise' to be one such example, where a Latinate vocabulary is employed which does not seem typical of the Authorised Version. The Bible contains many different styles, or at least *renditions* of different styles, the result of efforts by generations of scholars to translate a disparate body of texts written over the course of many centuries, in different languages, many if not all of which, are records of oral traditions. The Bible is thus a work of many different genres, including mythology, history or chronicle, poetry, social criticism, and mysticism. Biblical vocabulary is prevalent, and citation, marked and unmarked, frequent. Farnsworth's style conforms to the definitions 'hortatory' and 'incantatory' put forward by Bauman³⁸⁷.

The Epistle remains entirely within religious discourse, (apart from the almost Coppe-like 'this ensuing treatise') making only the faintest of political references despite sharp social criticism. This is in contrast to Leveller pamphlets of the previous decade, for example, which often have a Constitutionalist tone, seeking authorisation not only in Biblical, but in secular historical precedent. Lilburne's tracts can be strikingly anecdotal and personal in tone, making much more of practical social conditions and contemporary events than the Quakers. Nayler is (slightly) more 'political' than Farnsworth. Farnsworth's protest against injustice resides in a consistent association of contemporary circumstances with Biblical precedent.

Categorical assertions mean we either agree with Farnsworth or we don't, there is no middle way. Intertextual reference is with the Bible; the only voice quoted or named is Christ's. Farnsworth imputes motives to the 'carnal part',

³⁸⁷ Richard Bauman, *Let Thy Words be Few*.

and expresses contempt for worldly authority. The shadowy 'characters' of this representation are acted by external forces, they are little more than vessels for the opposing spirits which wage war for men's souls. This gives a feeling of individual helplessness. The final section of the Epistle nevertheless gives sincere, direct and thoughtful advice to the reader to direct his attention inward, beyond the text, all texts, to the inward light, and a supra-personal community of souls. The constant supplantation of one subject by another, and the inclusiveness of the Quaker vision, where actors and topics are replaced by others, themselves only different aliases disguising the identity of an immutable principle, all this creates a vertiginous sensation, we are unsure of our references. This dizziness is compounded by a confusion as to who, exactly, is talking to us. The text aims at a collective, even transcendent voice.

The use of the 'deontic' modality of duty, the categorical tone and the repeated references to Christ all contribute to the seriousness of this voice. The many negatively modalised expressions clearly indicate a firm disapproval of worldly activities, and the use of negatively framed processes also contributes to a sense of struggle against a restraining physicality.

Malcolm Coulthard argues that a text is directed to a notional or imagined reader, a useful idea, but not, as far as I am aware, an exact science among writers³⁸⁸. I would wish to go further, and state that a text creates such a notional reader, and the act of reading is to compare oneself with, to be drawn into relation to, this imaginary reader. This is of significance in relation to (for example) Catherine Belsey's theoretical focus on the creation of 'subjects'³⁸⁹. In attempting to recover meaning, or meanings, from an historical text it is important to consider what

³⁸⁸ Malcolm Coulthard, 'On Analysing and Evaluating Text', (in) *Advances in Written Text Analysis*, (ed.) Malcolm Coulthard, Routledge, London, (1994), pp.1-11, p.4.

³⁸⁹ Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, 'Introduction: Reading the Past', pp.1-10.

contemporary reader response may have been. It seems clear that Farnsworth's style and subject would have been capable of provoking highly polarised responses in the reading public. Baxter describes Quaker tracts as 'railing', that is, abusive and insulting language.

The experience of reading the Quakers leaves one giddy, but solemn. The 'weight' of the prose derives from its use of Biblical language and imagery, its address to matters of salvation and damnation, good and evil, which are under widespread discussion at the time, and granted supreme importance. Quakers have a tone of high seriousness in keeping with the vital importance of their subject, and an eminently puritan dislike of frivolity. The giddiness is generated by the proliferation of different but interchangeable topics and actors, the repetition and refiguring of stock phrases familiar from Biblical sources, the conflation of Biblical and contemporary perspectives exemplified by paradigmatic parallels, where priests equal Pharisees, persecutors equal the Serpent, Satan, or Antichrist, and Quakers equal prophets and Apostles. This latter identification is strengthened by the use of Biblical phraseology and imagery. Quaker style is a profoundly symbolic statement in its own right, both uprooting the reader from 'earthly wisdom' and bringing her/him into direct relation with the transcendent. It is an active attempt to re-animate the Divine Word.

Becoming both heavy and giddy might induce nausea, but might also produce a sort of elation. The text offers the conforming reader - and the terms of conformity are clearly set out, and severe - access to the Spirit of God within them, with transforming consequences borne out by the fervour and seriousness of the emerging prophets of the North. Quaker texts demand a high degree of identification from the reader, and this entails a high degree of seriousness. These demands would seem to imply that if the reader/writer relationship is to be fulfilled the texts would exert a powerful effect on their readership. Quaker tracts occupy an area which is neither factual nor fictional

in any clear sense. While I, as reader, feel that Farnsworth, Nayler and Fox are sincere in their averrals, I am not sufficiently persuaded of their status to be converted. Were I to be converted, this would give Quaker averrals the status of fact, at least to me. The opposition I draw between 'fact' and 'fiction' is not native to Quakers, however. Neither fact nor fiction satisfy the requirement for 'truth' as opposed to 'falsehood'. Mere physical and social 'facts' are subject to an over-arching judgement which sees them as the product of false consciousness.

The Epistle constructs a serious and committed reader, perhaps in need of reassurance, who is willing to accept the authority of the text. One method it employs is its very impenetrability; a reader willing to struggle through the dense undergrowth to reach the beatific vision of the concluding passage is surely committed. Not that the reader is then allowed any respite, the body of the text is similarly composed of exhortations and admonitions to a pure life in this unbending, impersonal, disembodied voice. The Epistle's main method is to excoriate the false and deceitful behaviour of 'the world', thus excluding from its readership those who feel implicated by such an uncompromising message. Another lies in its appeal to a transcendent reference, both outside, as attested by the voice of Christ (the ultimate validation in textual terms), and within, where the reader must turn for guidance.

Much of this revolves precisely around the question of 'voice', the tone of the voice being central to the generation of authority and authenticity. This observation is strengthened in the (presumed) context of seventeenth century reading practices; it is likely that texts were read aloud to an audience rather than silently and alone. The whole prophetic mission is predicated on the revelatory force of the tone, the manner, the style of the discourse. Without this voice there is no argument. It is the tumbling fervour of this voice as it sweeps along which creates the link between disparate concerns and relates them insistently

to a reified view of the world sustained by the dictation of this voice. It is a depersonalised voice, emanating as if from a collective soul, or from beyond.

A Discoverie of Faith

(second excerpt)

Now friend, if thou do but with a single eye, read this little ensuing Treatise, thou wilt not finde any gilded expressions in it, that doth arise from the wisdom of the flesh, for they do but feed the fleshly minde, which must be destroyed with a sore destruction; let me entreat thee, that when thou readest, thou may first return into thy own spirit, and see how thou standest in the fear of the Lord, which is to lay aside all evil; and see that thy understanding be kept open as thou readest, and thy minde free from all hard thoughts, and opinions of men, which ariseth out of the dark nature, stand free out of all mens words, that doth arise out of the corrupt nature, and give thy diligence and attention to what thou readest as well within as without, and it will shew thee the way that leadeth to salvation, and the true guide which it is written from, that thou mayest have union with him in the life and substance of it without all question or doubt, to live in the life and power of the truth itself; for as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth into the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be; wait wholly within, and sink down into the eternal love, and thou wilt see me and the rest, that we are in the unity of that one Spirit, where love is head, the daily bread, where the souls refreshment is for to be had, which makes the heart exceeding glad

(*A Discoverie of Faith*, 'Epistle', p.4)

This is the concluding section of the prefatory Epistle, a section which begins after the sole full-stop. This is both a convenient entry for me and seems to denote the irruption of a rather more personal tone. The syntax calms at this point, although the structure of appended explanatory clauses persists. Certain topics seem, intuitively, more important than others; the weighting of initial premise as against subsidiary explanation seems clearer in this passage than the last. General sections concerned broadly with one topic are demarcated by semi-colons.

This brusque and schematic view of the structure gives only one major theme: "thou (friend) read (with a single eye)"; the act and method of reading the text. This is restated: 'when thou readest', with further elaborations on the method, 'wait wholly within', and the pre-statements thereof: (thy) own spirit, understanding, minde, diligence, attention³⁹⁰ with the result, or consequence, of enlightenment. The essential focus of the Epistle is on the correct method of reading.

The passage depicts the reader as the active party, both directly, as 'thou', through elision, and through substitutions such as 'thy understanding'. Abstract states are similarly depicted, but in only seven cases, a lower proportion than in the previous excerpt. There are several instances of indeterminate causation, in two of which we may assume that the pronoun appropriate to the reader (thou) has been elided, although the choice of an indefinite construction allows the possibility that some other agency is involved. Perhaps Farnsworth is not certain that people 'have control' over their mental processes, which certainly befits one who has found himself subject to revelation.

'Gilded expressions' 'that doth arise from the wisdom of the flesh' are credited with feeding the 'fleshly minde', clearly a refiguring of the previous 'wisdom of the flesh', which proposes a circular motion in which 'gilded expressions' 'arise' from and then 'feed' their point of origin. This constitutes a psychological theory of reinforcement which is still current in debates on violence in the media, or child abuse, for example. Farnsworth is concerned that his writing should break this cycle of reinforcement and point the way for the reader out of earthly wisdom, their own sinful nature.

The insistent repetitions of 'mens words' and 'writings' indicates that Farnsworth does not feel that his writings are to be considered 'mens', rather they are not merely

³⁹⁰ That is, independent judgement, a stripping away of habits of culture,

human, but participate in the Spirit of Christ, the Fear of the Lord, a point also made by the adoption of a supra-personal, Godlike 'voice'. 'What thou readest', (substituted for by 'it'), is credited with 'showing the way that leadeth to salvation', a clear statement of the intent of this piece of writing. It is not claimed that the writing will of itself bring anyone to salvation. The text is a signpost to a door, as it were, an indication of the proper guide, rather than the guide itself. 'The true guide' of this clause acts on 'it' (what thou readest) in that the text 'was written from' 'the true guide'. This rather tortuously inverted construction affirms the text as inspired by the divine, but also distances it from the divine. The divine truth is not expressible in words, and although the text is distinguished from 'mens words and writings' it is not itself divine, but inhabits some middle ground between the earthly and the heavenly, a position otherwise denied in Quakerism's acutely dichotomous view. There follows a Biblical citation (Matthew 24, 27). The seamlessness of this incorporation indicates the closeness of the writing to Biblical models in both tone and construction, and thus to the Voice of God. After this (unmarked) Biblical citation Farnsworth begins his account of the blissful union and communion of souls he sees at the heart of the Quaker experience. This is expressed in such constructions as 'we are in', 'where love is head', 'where the souls refreshment is to be had' which indicate it to be a place or state beyond human individuality and human agency.

Personal and collective pronouns referring to the author and his co-religionists feature three times in this passage, in contrast to the piece as a whole. In one instance 'me' is portrayed as the active element in entreating the reader, a rare example of Farnsworth raising his head above the parapet. Even this could be seen differently, as the reader allowing the author's entreaty.

The text expresses no uncertainties: 'thou wilt', 'which ariseth', 'it will shew', 'without all question or doubt', etc. The use of 'must' falls between the 'deontic' modality of duty, and the 'epistemic' modality of likelihood; 'they do but feed the fleshly minde, which must be destroyed with a sore destruction'. This may be duty or prediction; indeed, as it refers to Biblical prophecy it almost certainly combines both.

Terms are often grouped in pairs, and near repetitions involving refiguring are also prominent. The passage has a high degree of cohesion, pairs of related terms are used as links through the course of the argument. There is a series of logically related conjunctions in the first clausal chain; *Now, if that, for, which*, and also the pairs *flesh/fleshly, destroyed/destruction*. There is also a thread of long 'e' sounds throughout the next clausal chain; 'me entreat thee', 'see', 'free'. 'Thy understanding' and 'thy minde', 'hard thoughts and opinions of men', 'dark nature/corrupt nature', 'diligence and attention', 'within/without', 'the way that leadeth/the true guide', 'the life and substance', 'question or doubt', 'life and power' and 'bread/head' are all paired forms employed as rhythmical and balancing elements. Those which are directly adjacent in the text are reinforcements of the first term through doubling, while others are more widely scattered, and contribute to the cohesion and rhythm of the text. The longest of these pairs is 'which ariseth out of the dark nature/that doth arise out of the corrupt nature'. The citation from Matthew is highly cohesive in its own right ('cometh, coming; cometh, shineth; east, west). There is also a burst of euphonic alliteration 'Wait wholly within', and the text concludes in rhyming couplets. The texture of the prose merges into that of lyric poetry, with the soft 's', 'sh' and 'f' sounds of 'where the souls refreshment is for to be had'.

Most writers would be delighted to be able to instruct readers in the proper way to read their text. Farnsworth

attempts to define the correct attitude to take to the subsequent work, denying merely aesthetic considerations, (gilded expressions), and urging the reader against cynicism and received opinion (hard thoughts, and opinions of men). The negatively modalised terms cluster at the beginning of the passage and give way to the positively weighted expressions which depict blissful unity in the Spirit. Of twenty-seven 'weighted' terms, seven are definitely negative, and are concentrated at the beginning of the excerpt, the latter portion being devoted to an increasingly joyous portrayal of unity and salvation. The passage moves through rhythmical and repetitious structures created with the frequent use of matched pairs towards this mystical union, expressed in gentle language, approaching the lyric, full of soft sounds. Farnsworth attempts to give a flavour of what he simultaneously declares to be inexpressible. This conundrum leads to a very complex series of substitutions in a circular series of processes:

it will shew thee the way that leadeth to
salvation, and the true guide which it is
written from, that thou mayest have union with
him in the life and substance of it
(A Discoverie of Faith,
'Epistle', p.4)

which 'life and substance' is presumably 'him', the 'true guide', Christ, who has, then, more or less dictated this text, and who is its validation, as well as destination; the voice from within to which the text directs us. He is further defined through substitution: 'the life and power of the truth itself;' and constitutes both a 'person' and a state. Here, as in the life of the early Quaker prophets, the line between the writer's individuality and the voice of God is penetrated and even broken. This is not achieved through Coppe's explosive role-play, but by a consistent and purposeful distancing of the personal. The powerfully disembodied voice of the Quaker God is not clothed in identifiably human form. Quaker writing from the very outset reaches for an otherworldly tone which identifies the prophetic voice with that of God.

I have no doubt that this passage conveys an emotional message through its construction rather than solely an intellectual one through argument. It begins with a stern, admonitory attitude, and relaxes into poetry when depicting the unity of the Quakers, rewarding the reader for persistence in a trajectory that is intended to mirror the movement of the anxious Seeker into confirmed belief.

What is most noble about Quaker writing, as writing, is its direct and persistent acknowledgement of the emptiness of writing. Derridean pre-echoes call us out of 'all mens Words and Writings', voices intermingle, participating in a stream of consciousness-raising. The Edenic communality, where Christ is the daily bread, is pre-lingual, participating in 'the Word', the generative truth which cannot be expressed in words. For though we explain ourselves to ourselves and others within and through language, ourselves, which are not ourselves, exist outside and before the language we use to describe us.

Quaker spirituality requires of its adherents stillness and silence. Voice is given to the Spirit only, and, as in meditative practices, the whirling of conscious thought is stilled. Writing is therefore only permissible as a message from another, regenerate world, it is merely a signpost to a silence within, it is a self-cancelling act, just as it is narrated by a self-cancelling voice.

The Quakers take to an extreme the Protestant casting aside of that ideological shroud 'the Great Chain of Being', wrought into an armour by E.M.W. Tillyard³⁹¹. That this conception of Divine Order underpinning social arrangements was convenient for those who held power and much publicised by their propagandists was clear from at least Elizabethan times. I find it difficult to believe that other strands of thought were not as systematically repressed as 'the Great Chain' was promoted. One alternative current in Elizabethan and Jacobean thinking about society can be detected in *A Mirrour for Magistrates* and the 'Satyrs' of John Donne. 'Providentialism', (a doctrine elaborated by Protestants in support of their aspirations - both heavenly and earthly - from the 'chosen people' strands of the Old Testament, and Christ's Covenant with man) is a vital ingredient in Cromwell's sense of mission. Any society which has just beheaded the Body Politic has placed open to question all the certainties of its symbolic system. This may well be a 'crisis of signification', what it certainly is is an added provocation to eschatological fervour. When cultural truths are called into question, transcendent truths will be sought as a refuge. The Millenarian current (amounting to obsession) in contemporary thought finds expression not only in the Quakers, Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists, 'Ranters', Seekers, and in the rhetoric and outlook of theocratic Calvinism, but in the Royalist propagandists behind the 'Battle of the Frogs', and the huge popularity of astrological Almanacs, Prophecies, and chap-books³⁹².

Nayler is already a seasoned participant in 'Pamphlet Wars' of a sort highly familiar as a literary subculture, both at

³⁹¹ E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Chatto and Windus, London, (1943).

³⁹² See Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press in the English Revolution*, UCL Press, London, (1993).

the time and later, in the era of Pope and Swift³⁹³. The 'Martin Marprelate' Tracts of the previous Century probably remain the most famous and popular of such polemics³⁹⁴. In 1655, Baxter was at or near the height of his influence, an influence which would wane after the Restoration, when he was offered (and refused to accept) a Bishopric³⁹⁵. His reputation was advanced by later generations, but at this time he was overcoming his reservations about Cromwell in the freedom he found to organise his Church on the lines he believed proper³⁹⁶. His 'Worcestershire Association' of 1652 was being adopted as a pattern by Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset, Somerset, Kent and Devon, he had contacts in Parliament, and his correspondents included Robert Boyle,

³⁹³ See Pat Rogers, *Hacks and Dunces*, for a good brief review of the world of pamphlet literature in post-Restoration England.

³⁹⁴ See Christopher Hill, 'Radical Prose in Seventeenth-Century England: From Marprelate to the Levellers' in *Collected Essays, Volume One Writing And Revolution In Seventeenth Century England*, Harvester, Brighton, (1985); Nigel Smith, 'Richard Overton's Marpriest Tracts: Towards a History of Leveller Style' (in) *The Literature of Controversy*, (ed.) Thomas Corns, Frank Cass, London, (1987).

³⁹⁵ Richard Baxter, (1615-1691). A weak article in *D.N.B.* describes him as a 'Presbyterian Divine'. He was the son of Richard Baxter of Eaton-Constantine, (Shropshire). Educated first by Curates, two of whom 'drank themselves to beggary'. Attended free school at Wroxeter. Never went to University. Self-educated in Ludlow Castle Library under nominal tutelage of Richard Wickstead to 1633. Visited Court, but disliked it. When twenty, he met Puritans Joseph Symonds and Walter Cradock. Became schoolmaster in Dudley, and ordained by Bishop Thornborough of Worcester. Assistant to Rev. William Madstard in Bridgnorth, 1640. Refused 'etcetera' oath. Became vicar of Kidderminster April 1641. On outbreak of Civil war he sided with Parliament (largely through fear of 'Papist' plot to regain England for Rome). Moved to Gloucester and then Coventry, where he preached for the Garrison, and disputed with Baptists. Became preacher to Colonel Whalley's Regiment. Retired from Army due to ill-health. Returned to Kidderminster, where he opposed the 'Solemn League and Covenant', despite having already signed it. Presided over rising success of his Association model. Immediately before return of Charles, he moved to London, where he is thought to have been involved in negotiations over the 'Restoration'. Was offered, but refused, Bishopric on reinstatement of Episcopacy. When the Act of Uniformity was passed, he left London. He was imprisoned from February 1685-November 1686, and tried by the brutal Judge Jeffries. *D.N.B. Vol.1, Abadie-Beadon*, pp.1349-1357.

³⁹⁶ Baxter wrote and organised *The humble petition of many thousands...of the county of Worcester*, which was presented to the Rump Parliament in December 1652. On the twenty-eighth of March 1653, he published *The Worcester-shire petition to the parliament for the Ministry of England defended*, a response to 'Queries' arising from his proposal. This was in turn attacked by Benjamin Nicholson in *Truths Defence against lies*, in typically Quaker terms, focussing on the question of church lands and tithes. *Truths Defence* starts 'Thou Fowler, who snares for others madest, art in them found fast thyself; and for thy lies are cast into the pit, from whence thou shalt never rise', (p.1). The 'Worcestershire Association', which Baxter founded in 1652, was the model for a number of 'county ministerial associations', founded on the basis of Baxter's *Christian Concord* (1653), which sets out beliefs and discipline. The movement attracted moderate Calvinists, but not Presbyterians or 'New Prelatists'. See William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and*

the future Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson, Colonel Edward Whalley, (in whose Parliamentary regiment he had served as chaplain from 1645-1647), and John Eliot and Increase Mather in distant New England. His personal friend John Howe was to become one of Cromwell's several chaplains. In 1653, Baxter had corresponded with John Dury.

Baxter was a Churchman first and foremost, a figure of determined, if limited, influence, and a prolix campaigner for his conception of a 'Christian Commonwealth', or - what amounted to the same thing - a 'National Church'. He wrote and published extensively³⁹⁷ and pursued an individual position on Church organisation which aimed to promote a truly 'catholick' Church of England, one that united all godly Protestants, whilst controlling 'Papists' and the ungodly. He was frequently caught between the ideological positions taken by others; by placing himself between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Arminians and Calvinists he procured twice as many opponents as any of these parties. He wrote a partial defence of Arminianism, but refers to 'Puritans' with the greatest respect and fondness. His basic position, informed by Elizabethan churchmen such as Grindall and Foxe, was inclusive, nostalgic and disciplinarian. He believed that Church and State working in concert could maintain godly order in the Nation, but felt that the Scottish Presbyterians took control over the secular authority too far. He advocated closer control over the behaviour of local Ministers; he was not opposed to Bishops, but felt that they were too remote from local clergy. His great fear, which informs contemporary thinking to a powerful degree, is of the Roman Church extending its influence once more over the Nation. Anti-Papist sentiment was one major reason for the execution of Archbishop Laud, and the outbreak of Civil War³⁹⁸.

the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution, Croom Helm, London, (1979), pp.164-166.

³⁹⁷ A.G. Matthews lists one hundred and thirty-five publications in his lifetime, and six posthumously published. *The Works of Richard Baxter: an annotated list*, A.G. Matthews, Oxted, (1932).

³⁹⁸ See William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, pp.47-51, where he discusses both Baxter's dread of 'Papism' and his reluctance to identify the Pope as Antichrist.

Baxter seeks to be inclusive, but he is inclusive on his own terms³⁹⁹. Although he defended tithes, associating them with the right of Landlords to collect rent, he did not himself collect after the Restoration, living from his private income. His theology is Calvinistic and Covenantal, although it allows greater weight on works than pure Calvinism. It is fair, I think, to classify him under that notoriously loose term 'Puritan'.

In 1654, Baxter was a member of the 'Commission on Fundamentals' which was convened to lay down tenets for the Church on which all could agree. Typically, this Commission could not agree. Baxter seems to have desired to exclude as few as possible with forms of words. 'Orthodoxness is one of the deluders of hypocrites.'⁴⁰⁰ None of this prevents him from employing intemperate language against his opponents, as can be seen by the tone of his anti-Quaker pamphlet *The Quakers Catechism* (London, 1655), which Nayler coolly describes as 'a rage'. Among Baxter's constant refrains is that to 'overdo' in matters of doctrine and observance - to be too precise and exclusive - is to 'undo' the potential for unity within one National Protestant Church. The Quakers themselves, and sectaries in general, are seen by Baxter as so many Trojan horses for the Papacy.

Nayler's attack on the patrician Baxter takes the form of a laborious point by point rebuttal of the arguments in *The Quakers Catechism*. The title alone implies that the Quakers are Papists, and little could be calculated to annoy a disputatious Quaker like James Nayler as much as accusations of Roman formalism and corruption. Nayler's text,

³⁹⁹ Baxter's own communion was restricted to the 'godly'. Only six hundred of his parishioners received communion, leaving approximately 1200 outside his discipline. See Charles Don Gilbert, 'Richard Baxter's Ministry in Kidderminster, 1641-1661', M.Phil thesis, University of Birmingham, (August 1995), p.98.

⁴⁰⁰ Baxter, 'Apology', (in) Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge*, Oxford University Press, London, (1951), p.9.

AN
ANSWER
TO A
BOOK
called
the Quakers Catechism
Put out by
Richard Baxter.
Wherein the Slanderer is searched, his Questions
Answered, and his deceit discovered, whereby the
Simple have been deceived : And the Popery
proved in his own bosom, which he would have
cast upon the Quakers.

Published for the sake of all who desire to come out of
Babylon, to the Foundation of the true Prophets and
Apostles, where Jesus Christ is the light and Cor-
ner Stone; where God is building a Habita-
tion of Righteousness and everlasting
Peace; where the Children of
Light do rest.

Also some Quaeries for the discovering of the false
Grounds of the literal Priest-hood of these days,
in the last times of Antichrist.

If you know the truth, the truth shall make you free.
James Nailor.

(the extensive title page of which I reproduce in full above), is notably close-printed, and equally densely argued. His normally circuitous approach is restricted by the task of rebutting Baxter. Indeed, his form is dictated by Baxter, and some of the resultant sentences are almost terse.

Nayler's rebuttal is represented as a conversation; he reports Baxter and responds, dissecting imagery and argument. He is careful, even nit-picking, and his text is several times the length of Baxter's. The architecture of his tract is dictated by this. Nayler begins with Baxter's 'epistle', in which Baxter excuses himself for so much as bothering with the Quakers; works through his 'Letter to a young unsettled Friend' and then proceeds to deal with Baxter's 'queries' about which he complains, with some justification, and an apparent weariness:

Then thou goes making a show, as that thou would Answer our Quaeries, and these thou folds up by six together, which thou canst not answer; and sends us to a Book, we know not where, to seek an Answer, which thou calls a Defence of a Petition; yet though thou Answer not one of the six, in what thou falls short in Answering, thou makes up in asking; asking ten, where thou answerest not one: so that instead of answering 24, thou hast asked above threescore; but few of

those thou wast asked, hast thou gone about to answer: but thou begins, as followeth, with our first Quairy, and thy false slanders and lies thou casts upon us, are double to thy Quaeries, as I shall make it appear, if I be called to number them; but I am weary with raking in that filthy puddle, yet thy Queries are answered, and some of thy lies disproved.

(James Nayler, *An Answer to a Book called The Quakers Catechism*, p.16)⁴⁰¹

So the first sixteen pages amount to no more than an introduction to the theological debate which follows, based on an examination of Baxter's responses to Quaker 'queries' (which, as Nayler has made clear, consist mostly of counter-questions themselves)⁴⁰². This section continues to the bottom of page thirty-seven, where it is succeeded by responses to Baxter's own set of 'queries' to the Quakers. This third section continues to the end of page forty-eight, whereupon it is succeeded by another set of Quaker 'queries' designed to set out their theological position in contra-distinction to Baxter's.

The early part of each pamphlet is devoted to Baxter's previous encounters with Quakers. According to Lamont⁴⁰³, both Thomas Goodaire and the better-known Richard Farnsworth were imprisoned in 1654 for interrupting his services. In the account given by Nayler, Baxter was challenged in the pulpit at Kidderminster, having the hecklers ejected, all save Goodaire, who, although

staying until thou had done, and then speaking to thee and the people,

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.4)

(waiting, as legally required, until the sermon had closed to renew disputation,) Nayler ruefully observes

⁴⁰¹ James Nayler, *An Answer to a Book called The Quakers Catechism*, (London, 1655). Hereafter referred to as *An Answer*.

⁴⁰² This exchange, a representative of countless others, thoroughly undermines Christopher Hill's statement in 'From Marprelate to the Levellers': 'Classical and Biblical allusions are now subordinated to the argument. Traditional techniques of controversy - following the adversary paragraph by paragraph, dissecting him at length - are becoming old-fashioned.' *Collected Essays, Vol 1*, p.91. Not too old-fashioned for Baxter, or for Nayler and the Quakers either, it seems.

all the satisfaction he got, was, that he was
hailed to prison; yea, twice hath he been
imprisoned by thy Ministry:

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.4)

Nayler's account seems to be inaccurate, in that it was not Baxter but his deputy Richard Sergeant who was preaching on Sunday the twenty-fifth of March when Farnsworth and Goodaire staged their demonstration, as Baxter was suffering one of his periodic bouts of ill-health.

Nayler chooses terms which foreground the inequality of power relations in this confrontation; 'thy high place' (p.5), 'Lords' (p.13), and 'Master' (p.11), terms which also contribute to his theological arguments. Baxter, for all his difficulties in the face of social unrest and doctrinal heterodoxy represents power in relation to the Quakers. He exercises this power, both symbolically, by appearing in robes, presiding over a service he directs and leads, by requiring the silence of his congregation while he speaks, by requiring honorific titles and other signs of deference; and practically, by having those who challenge or interrupt him 'hailed out', even imprisoned. This inequality of relations is used by Nayler to prove the Quaker's comparative closeness to the Apostolic condition; it was ever so, the godly are persecuted by the servants of the Devil. Baxter's resort to force merely demonstrates his association with the 'earthly powers'.

Baxter is not quite as clear in his attitude towards Quakers, although he thinks of them as a rabble - 'this wilde generation' - he also accuses them of being under the control of 'Papists'. What is quite clear is that he disapproves of their theology, their behaviour, and the effect they are having on society and religion. Baxter had been attacked by Quakers before; his pamphlet *The Worcester-shire petition... defended* (1653) accuses those who would

⁴⁰³ William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, Croom Helm, London, (1979), p.175.

abolish tithes and confiscate Church lands of sacrilege⁴⁰⁴. Tithes are a significant bone of contention. Without their collection no institutional, National Church could be sustained, but the burden of tithes fell disproportionately on the rural poor; the small farmer, copyholder or tenant. This was an issue that the Quakers pursued with determination and vigour, combining as it did opposition to any institutional church with concern over the economic exploitation of the poor. In this, as in so much else, they continue the social and political concerns of the Levellers, though from a far more spiritualist and rural perspective, and the Diggers.

Nayler's target bifurcates at every re-examination, even in this clearest of conflicts. While he deals closely with Baxter's text, he aims also at the position Baxter holds as a professional clergyman; those who stand behind and with him in his position, his 'Generation'; the Church in which he fulfils that function; the congregations of such Churches; Baxter as an individual, who in defence of his position (perhaps more social than ideological in Nayler's view) has become a slanderer 'against the Lamb', an 'enemy' of Christ, 'a bloody persecutor'. Further, there is the wider audience for what is a published pamphlet, a contribution to public debate. Perhaps entering into public disputations with well-known figures was thought likely to attract an audience for the Quaker message.

The Quakers had already targeted Baxter, a vocal critic of sectaries of all persuasions, by sending him 'five several papers' challenging him to dispute with them. Both sides claim to have attempted such a face-to-face debate, but it never occurred. Baxter himself was concerned that it should not take place during a service in his Church. The dispute centres on three points:

1. By what means can Man have knowledge of God ?

⁴⁰⁴ Benjamin Nicholson, *Truths Defence against lies*, (165?), attacks Baxter's *The Worcestershire petition.....defended*, over Tithes and human perfectibility.

2. What is the proper form of worship ?
3. What is the proper role and organisation of a Christian Church ?

The attitudes of the participants to these points are diametrically opposed, despite some theological closeness. Both represent forms of what we loosely term 'Puritanism', although that term is, and always was, contested; but Baxter is basically a conservative, and Nayler believes in a far more personal experience of God than he will allow. Baxter belongs to a theocratic tradition which sees the clergy as Teachers and guides for the 'simple people' of Nayler's title-page. While both would agree that ultimately Christ alone must rule, for Baxter in practice this means that Godly Magistrates and Clergy must rule in his name. Nayler, on the other hand, has already (in his own estimation) set up Christ as King within his heart, and intends that all should do the same, invoking the total destruction of all earthly authority. In regard to the first point I isolate above, Baxter's view is that it is through the Word of God as transmitted in the Bible that man may come to know God's will, (if not, exactly, God himself). This requires the interpretation of professional experts.

Quakers place their faith in direct revelation through the Light, the Seed of God within the individual. Yet Quakers are also adept at Scriptural citation, and in the course of the dispute Nayler makes frequent attempts to expose inconsistencies and contradictions within Baxter's case; contradictions in the Letter, and perhaps the Spirit of Baxter's discourse. So Nayler is not above a little scholarship and literary criticism of his own; 'I shall manifest from thine own mouth, bring thine own Book to witness against thee' (p.5).

The second and third points are intimately connected. Baxter was not alone in using the power of the law to protect his favoured form of worship. He stresses the order, discipline and tradition of the Church he represents. Quakers utterly reject any such bureaucratic and formalist conception. At

this stage in their history Quakers had no organised structure and were an individualistic movement of the sort Weber characterises as 'charismatic'⁴⁰⁵. Calvinism itself developed most of the symbology Quakers use against it in the 'sufferings of the Saints' and the doctrine of election. The dynamic of Quaker theology, its direct and personal connection between God and Man, only further extends Calvinism's oft-cited⁴⁰⁶ tendency to free the individual from custom and hierarchy in order that s/he may follow the superior law of conscience.

Baxter's pamphlet proposes the existence of a 'young *unsettled Friend*' who seeks his views on the Quakers. The body of his text publishes his 'answer', so in Baxter's case too there is a double object of address, the 'Friend' and the public at large. Baxter starts out in sorrowful vein, which soon hardens into contemptuous reproof:

It is a very sad thing to me and should be so much more to you, to think that after so much pains as you have taken in duty, and so much zeal as you have professed in God, you should yet be so unacquainted with the will and Word of God, and Christ should have so little interest in your heart, as that such horrid unchristian doctrines and practices should be so easily entertained by you, and so far approved of: I marvell why you took it for so great a work of grace to convert you from prophaneness; and now will take it for a greater work to convert you to it again, or to much worse ?

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, pp.11-12)

Perhaps Baxter genuinely feels himself the victim of a personal betrayal. For whatever reason, as his letter progresses the accusatory tone becomes withering.

Oh miserable man ! Is all your hearing and praying come to this ? Dare you meet the

⁴⁰⁵ See Max Weber, 'The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism', (in) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (trans. & ed.) H.H.Gerth and C.Wright Mills, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, (1948).

⁴⁰⁶ See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (trans) Talcott Parsons, Allen and Unwin, London, (1930); also Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, (1965), perhaps especially with regard to John Knox, Chapter 3. The theory of such a psychological effect has become a commonplace of social and religious history.

messengers of Christ in the face, and tell them they are Liars and deceivers ? Dare you cast out the holy worship of Christ as false worship, and seek to draw people into the contempt of it ? Dare you damn those Churches and millions of Saints that Christ has bought with his precious blood ? Dare you seek to draw men to hate their Teachers whom Christ set over them, and to hate his people as though they were the Children of the Devil, and to hate his worship and holy waies ? Alas that ever a man in his wits should look upon such abominations as amiable, and much more that any should be so mad as to do this under the name and profession of a Christian ! That you can imagine the furious opposition to the whole Army of Christ, his Officers, his Church and Ordinances, can yet be a work that Christ accepteth: That you should no better know Christs work from Satans, nor know that it is the Dragon whose warfare these men do manage ?

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, p.12)

The crushing force of the five rhetorical questions, four of them headed by an accusatory 'Dare', emphasising the effrontery of such a position, each also packed with guilt triggers such as 'the holy worship of Christ', 'his precious blood', 'holy waies', accusing the friend of damning 'millions of saints', the last question a tripartite list focused around the repetition of an accusatory 'hate'; all this reveals Baxter as no tender disputant. The next sentence embodies a neat opposition between 'a man in his wits' and one 'so mad as to do this'. All this is intended to shame and humiliate. Baxter introduces military metaphors; 'Army of Christ, his Officers', eventually alluding to the Dragon's war of the book of Revelation. In context, even 'Ordinances' has a military ring, although it plainly means rules rather than supplies. Such is the force and speed of these accusations that the fact that they embody many of Baxter's ideological assumptions might be overlooked. The unanswerable quality of the accusatory questions make them an exercise of rhetorical power. Rhetorical questions inevitably evoke the 'correct' response, whilst simultaneously denying the freedom to reply. As such they are a powerful means of influencing the reader, bringing him/her into collusion with the author's viewpoint. Such devices demonstrate that this discourse is

under Baxter's control; this is his field, everything within it is named and owned, all others are trespassers.

Nayler is dismissive of such stuff :

thou print a Letter, thou saist, thou sent to one of them to reclaim him, under pretence that he desired thy thoughts of us; and evil thoughts thou returns him in this Letter.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.9)

Nayler does not seek to unpack the ideological baggage of Baxter's condemnation, but mention of the Dragon elicits this response:

And says thou Alass ! that ever a man in his wits should no better know the work of Christ from Satans, nor know, that it is the Dragon whose warfare these men manage. I say, Thou shameless one, dost thou cause the servants of the living God to be hailed to prison, and suffer them almost to be murdered before thy face, not at all resisting, but the people by thee stirred up to the thing, and for no other thing, but coming to declare to your face against thy false worship, which God ever sent his servants to do. And saist thou, We manage the war of the Dragon, and do the work of Satan : is not the war of the Dragon to devour the Lamb where he is manifest? which ever was the work the hirelings was found in; and is it not the Devil that casts in to Prison the innocent, Rev. 2.9,10. and was ever any under the Gospel found in that work; but such who was of the synagogue of Satan.....: And do we manage the Dragons war, who suffer all this at your hands, and much more ? prove that in Scriptures or be ashamed of thy false accusation, and take it to thyself, till thy rage cease, and thou give over devouring the Lambs:

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.10)

Nayler rebukes Baxter for his angry tone, but it is not far distant in his own contribution. Baxter's 'rage' is not yet spent; he will adopt a more reasoning voice shortly.

That the Devil can no sooner bait his hook, but they greedily catch at it, and swallow it without chewing; yea nothing seems to grosse for them, but so it seems Novelty all goes down. I am afraid if they go a little further, they will believe him that shall say, The Devil is God, and to be worshipped and obeyed.

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, pp.12-13)

Symbolic counters such as the Lamb and the Dragon can be advanced in support of either case, as they are derived from the Christian symbology both sides claim as their own. Nayler feels he has the trump suit here, however; in practice, in behaviour, Baxter enacts repressive force on the Quakers. From this standpoint, and with great significance for Nayler's understanding of his own persecution, the repressive actions of authority are seen as an accolade, a mark of success, a blessing, proof of God's favour and of Satan's discomfort.

Such never take pains with men's souls, who takes care, and lays snares to destroy their bodies: Christs sheep was never such wolves, by their fruits we know them; they who believe these Christs Ministers, may so believe the Devil is God (as thou saist) who should be worshipped and obeyed in you.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.10)

Nayler twists Baxter's material here to push home the association of repressive power with the Devil's work. Baxter, as the enforcer of repression is unequivocally named (or, for Nayler, 'discovered') as the Devil's servant. I am slightly uncomfortable with the less elegant trope of knowing wolves by their fruits. Nayler employs sharply binary oppositions to make his point; sheep/wolves, mens souls/their bodies, and a pervading feature of the debate is the binary and exclusive nature of the judgements; a practice, person or position is always either of ultimate good or ultimate evil, there is no room for anything in between. Such attitudes reveal a highly conflicted and polarised social field; Baxter's military metaphors are far from misplaced. The symbology, drawn from the Book of Revelations, participates in (precipitates?) the instantiation of Armageddon in the historical plane. It reveals all events on Earth to be merely projections of the eternal war between good and evil for the souls of men, exposes the cosmological drama that underpins the visible. This rhetoric (which is a way of seeing, a viewpoint, and a way of understanding, a hermeneutic) proves a double-edged

weapon. The demonisation of opponents is itself an act of witchcraft. Such attitudes leave no room for the exemplary Christian virtue of Charity; there is no suggestion that either side will turn the other cheek. This is not merely a matter of life and death, after all, it is (as Bill Shankly said in another context) 'far more important than that'.

Eschatology is Nayler's home ground. The problem here for Baxter is that while he may believe this rhetoric, the Quakers, in their literal-minded pursuit of an Apostolic mission, are quite prepared to live it. This is not to decry Baxter's sincerity, both men seem appallingly sincere, but to acknowledge that Nayler's commitment to the apostolic condition is more extreme in practice, more directly imitative.

Baxter's next move is to accuse the Quakers of spiritual pride. While following the path of Christ requires humility, to associate oneself with the Biblical Saints (as Nayler does on the title page) seems less than humble, and Baxter's case is certainly arguable: Pride was the sin to which Quakers attributed Nayler's 'downfall', and Fox himself was never wrong, by his own account. Baxter constructs an elaborate explanation on shaky theological foundations⁴⁰⁷ in attempting defend his conviction that expert opinion holds greater weight than the insights of the untutored.

You know you are a young man, and have had little opportunity to be acquainted with the Word of God, in comparison to what your teacher hath had: if you presume that you that you are so much more beloved of God then he, that God will reveal to you without seeking and study, which upon the greatest diligence he will not reveal to him; what can this conceit proceed from but pride? God commandeth study and meditating day and night in his Laws; your teacher hath spent twenty, if not an hundred hours in such Meditation where you have spent one: He hath spent twenty if not an hundred

⁴⁰⁷ This being said, Baxter's view was fairly idiosyncratic, in this as in other matters. He comes much closer to adopting a doctrine of salvation by works, for example, than Calvinism could allow. No orthodox Protestant could believe that God was in any contractual sense obliged to any human, except by Christ's 'Covenant'.

hours in praier to God for his spirit of Truth and Grace, where you have spent one: His prayers are as earnest as yours: His life is much more holy and heavenly than yours; his Office is to teach, and therefore God is as it were more engaged to be his Teacher, and to make known his Truth to him then you; is it not then apparent pride for you to be confident that you are so much wiser than he, and that you are so much more lovely in Gods eyes, that he will admit you more into the knowledge of his Mysteries, then those who have better used his own appointed means to know them?

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, pp.13-14)

Which sounds, perhaps, as much an expression of spiritual pride as a criticism of it. Baxter reveals slight embarrassment at two points, with 'as it were' when he attempts to bind God to his service, and in the confused plurality of the closing statement, where he expands into a generalised representative of clergymen, or the orthodox. Baxter asserts himself an expert, as earnest, as living a holy and heavenly life, and sardonically criticises his young friend for thinking himself wiser and more lovely than he in God's eyes. The association of 'conceit' (in the contemporary sense of 'idea') with 'pride' is suggestive of their later drawing together.

Nayler tears into this picture.

I say the hellish pride thou hast plainly discovered, where it is. But whose righteousness is all this by which thou hast thus engaged God to thee, who art but yet praying for the Spirit of truth and grace; will god be ingaged with thy graceless lying spirit, which thou uses in this thy Book, wherein thou utters so many graceless untruths, to ingage the world to thee ? thou art mistaken, God will not be so ingaged, nor with that spirit; he will be served with his own.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.10)

The first sentence is the shortest of Nayler's I have ever seen. The pressure of dialogue is affecting him. He sharply enunciates the qualitative difference between earnestness and revelation.

Thy earnest prayers and righteousness, before
the Spirit of truth and grace, and without it;
how they ingage God thou mayest read in 1 Kings
18, from the 16. to the 30. and Luke 18.11,12.
and there thou may read thy boasting lines, and
their acceptance, and thy ingagement, and thy
name:

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.10)

The citations are harshly critical.

Baxter's text continues to satirise the position of his
young 'friend', explicitly extending the ridiculous image he
employs to the Quakers.

and for you in ignorance to run about with the
Shell on your head, exclaiming to the world of
the ignorance of your late Teachers ? I say not
that you do so, but the Quakers whom you approve
of do so, and much more.

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, p.14)

Nayler responds by criticising Baxter's tone again, a rebuke
made more potent by the weighty subject he addresses.

We know, God freely gives a measure of his
Spirit to every one of us, freely to profit
withal; and improving that to his praise, we
receive more freely; and we are so far from
ingagement of God by all we do, that we find
ourselves unprofitable servants, but this thou
knowest not with thy vain light words, who tells
of us running away with the shell on our head:
Our head thou knows not, who must break thee to
pieces with all thy light boasting vain words.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.11)

The passage turns on two key terms, first 'freely', which
rejects the contractual implications of Baxter's 'engage'⁴⁰⁸,
and the underlying reference to the parable of the talents
('unprofitable servant(s)') replaces Baxter's theological
innovation with a more orthodox one, men as God's servants.
Even this is rejected. Quakers are so humble they fail in
their own estimation. The second term which I foreground is
'head'. Nayler here takes a bizarre leap through the use of

⁴⁰⁸ The precise meaning of which term is slippery. Contractual implications
are there, certainly, and addressed by Nayler's 'freely' (without
obligation), and in the 'contract' which precedes marriage, but Baxter may
have a meaning closer to 'earn the affection of' in mind. Whatever, Nayler
chooses to foreground and attack the use of this term.

a pun, employing the metaphorical extension which denotes Christ as the head of the church. This move demonstrates the slippery nature of these highly-charged symbolic terms, whose metaphorical use is so common and so close to the surface. A new and shocking interpretation lurks behind Baxter's image, waiting for a transformation such as Nayler enacts to discover it⁴⁰⁹. Religious discourse, with its highly metaphorical quality, is a rich source of indeterminacy as well as certainty, and Nayler's wordplay here is both serious and dangerous. Its first effect is to cancel the satire of Baxter's image by making it seem to apply to Christ, rendering Baxter's joke blasphemous. Secondly it asserts the Quakers' seriousness and their adherence to truth. Thirdly it re-asserts the Quakers' direct connection to Christ, he is their 'head'. Fourthly, Baxter's serious intent is reversed; now he becomes the producer of 'light boasting vain words'. Nayler has employed a powerful device, but one that tends to call into question the value of all such symbolic terms. Such a manoeuvre may achieve a tactical success and yet prove a strategic disaster. Nayler at any rate demonstrates himself a subtle reader, and perhaps a Quaker lack of respect for the 'letter' is in play here. Or perhaps a wholesale crisis of signification.

And for the Quakers, you are blinde if you see not their horrible Pride; You'l perhaps think it strange that Pride should be the very Master-sinne in them that go in so poor a garb, and cry out against Pride so zealously as they go up and down the world, as if they were sent from Heaven to perswade men to wear no Lace, or Cuffs, or Points, and that damn so many Ministers for being called Masters. But alas you do not know that Pride of inward qualifications known as spiritual Pride, is the most killing and abominable ! the better the thing is that you are proud of , the worse is your Pride. O what a brave thing does it seem in these mens eyes, that they should seem to be possessed with such

⁴⁰⁹ Here in the 1650's signs are generally considered more or less denotative. Although language is 'fallen' with Babel from the purity of the 'Adamic' language, and bears little relation to the Word which was in the beginning, still it retains something of this quality of directness. Forensic rhetoric, for example, was considered capable of providing proofs of propositions by purely verbal means. This is perhaps not far from the more exaggerated claims sometimes made for discourse analysis.

an excellent spirit as can trample upon worldly glory, and can boisterously contemn all that are not of their sect, and that can despise Dignities, and be equall with the greatest: yea, that only they should have this admirable spirit, and that all others are Children of the Devil, and under their feet: Though other men should never so much sleight them, yet do they wonderfully please themselves with these high thoughts of themselves; for Pride is first an overvaluing of mans self, and thinking himself above what is meet, and then a desire that others should do so by him too.

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, p.15)

This is a savagely reductive and subtly psychological critique of the Quaker position. 'O what a brave thing does it seem', 'they wonderfully please themselves with these high thoughts of themselves', attack the Quakers' certitude, but perhaps 'as if they were sent from Heaven to perswade men to wear no Lace, or Cuffs, or Points'⁴¹⁰, in its coupling of the Divine and the trivial, may tend to denigrate the seriousness of God's word, even as it undermines the Quakers' mission. For whose is 'this admirable spirit' which Baxter dismisses so lightly ?

Baxter enters into a doctrinal denunciation of Quaker pride through 'four particular evidences', in brief

Quakers 'affirm themselves to be perfect without sin'. Quakers set themselves above other people, (something Baxter would feel keenly).

They damn 1600 years of Church history,

They appropriate the language of the Scriptures.

There are several incidental pleasures, resulting largely from Baxter's bilious temper. Point two trails out with an unclosed parenthesis: '[Quakers] vilifie the most holy and eminent servants of God, and condemn all the Churches in the world, as if heaven were made for them alone (if it were so well, that all of them did beleieve a heaven besides that

⁴¹⁰ A pre-echo of the sartorial satire in Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, from a clergyman with a similar outlook. Donne's 'Satyr Three' draws related distinctions between Calvinism and Catholicism in terms of appearance.

within them, which I suppose is but a sorry heaven.' Point three adds 'and that God made the world, and Christ died for it, with a purpose to save none but a few Quakers that the world never knew but a few years agoe;'

Nayler responds to the 'four particulars' with a rash of Scriptural citation in defence of Perfectibility, followed by this summation:

and thou that Ministers against this, and calls it the Language of Hell, and the Devil's mouth, which the Scriptures witness, art a Blasphemer and a Minister of Antichrist, and its no railing to judge the tree by its fruit; and when thou hast done, Thou saist the Devil himself has less pride then to think himself without sin; and if we have no sin what need we pray, or what need have we of the blood of Christ ? I say, Thy confusion is manifest, who before accused us that the Devil spake this in our mouthes and now thou art clearing him from it; but what hath thou to do, or he either, with perfection, who art out of Christ, and in your own wills, worldly-pleasing, and envious, murtherers, in a rage; what perfection is there, unless perfect wickedness ?

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.11)

Baxter's accusation of the appropriation of language perhaps warrants most attention:

And I should suppose that their proud, scornful railing language should put it out of doubt what spirit they are of, to any that are acquainted with the language of Christs Spirit, and of Satan, and are able to judge of Spirits by their most palpable effects, and to know darknesse from light. But you say: It is Scripture-Language that they speak: I answer, the greater is their presumptuous sin in making so ill a use of Scripture-language, as to serve Satan by it, and use it for reviling; What if Christ called Judas a devil ? Is it therefore lawful to call Peter so, or any faithful Servants of Christ ?

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, p.16)

Baxter is not too humble to compare himself with the Apostle Peter, on whom Christ declared he would build his Church. He makes deliberate and pointed use of characteristic Quaker terms in the first section ('what spirit they are of', 'darknesse/light', 'to judge of spirits by their most

palpable effects'). Quakers are guilty of the 'presumptuous sin' of using the Bible against its custodian, the Teacher. To use this language is to steal from the Church. Baxter's awareness of the subversion of his own rhetoric is clear here, and again in the discussion of 'Papism' which is to follow. What defence does Baxter have against his own weapons? Nayler thinks he has two, neither of which can work⁴¹¹. Baxter will use anything he can reach, that is clear. He has used 'Papist' arguments in defence of tradition (the 'Apostolic Succession'), and attacked Quakers for condemning the 'millions of Saints' of the Roman Church. Next he will attempt to support the allegation that Quakers are Papists, or the dupes of Papists.

Nayler responds in a form he has established in working through the list:

Thy fourth thing is: That which thou callest our proud, scornful, railing language, which thou saist should put it out of doubt what spirit we are of, to any who are acquainted with Christs Spirit, and of Satan, and are able to judge of Spirits, and know darkness from light. I say, The Language of Christ we use unto thee, who art found in the work of Satan, therefore thou canst not bear it; but thy filthy unclean words thou hast cast upon us in thy Book, which none in Scripture ever used, we shall leave the judgement of Him that judges Spirits, and to all who know light from darkness: But thou foreseeing thyself guilty, makes an objection; it is Scripture-Language that they speak, and when thou hast done deceitfully, answerest, saying, The greater thy presumptuous sin in making so ill a use of Scripture-Language, and calls it, serving Satan; and thus thou proves it, saying, What if Christ called Judas a Devil, is it therefore lawful to call Peter so: I say yea, if Peter be found in the Devils work, Matth. 16.23. much more thou and thy Generation, who none of you yet came so far as Peter, who denied all to follow Christ; but you will have all you can get, though you deny Christ, and all his Rules, for the getting of it; and such are no faithful servants of Christ, but of their own bellies, and their lusts and pride;

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.12)

⁴¹¹ Citation from p.8 below, (p.268) 'I say, thou hast undertaken...'

Thus does Nayler subvert the symbolic names by which Baxter hopes to assert his own position as rock of the Church. Nayler responds that you can call yourself what you like, you are still 'found in the Devils work'. Nayler turns the 'deny/Christ' relationship over as well; Peter - despite denying Christ - still denied all to follow Christ, Baxter denies Christ to have all he can get. Nayler transforms Baxter's potent symbol of tradition and stability into a mere name, the product of the Letter; it is not names but 'fruits' which prove the issue.

Baxter's theocratism represents for both a continuation of the traditions of the Church of Rome, something Nayler exploits in turning back accusations of 'Popery' with some force. Baxter observes that the Quaker technique is to attack any institutional Church on the same grounds Protestants had used to attack Papal authority, weakening the ties of tradition and respect.

(saist thou) it was the main example that the Reformers had for the ruin of the Papal Kingdom, to perswade men that the Pope was Antichrist; and to disgrace the Popish clergy, and saist thou, They would attempt the destruction of our Church by the same means:

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.13)

This is typical of Nayler's style of reportage, which is largely accurate; he proceeds immediately to the counter-attack:

I say, Why not ? why may not that which lopt off some of your branches, now the time is come, cut up the whole root, being laid to it by the same power, in a great measure ?

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.13)

The argument continues in this form, with Baxter's words in quotation followed by the insouciant 'I say, Why not?', a child's unanswerable question.

Thou saist, Our first way is to bring people in dislike of their Teachers, without which, we have no hope of succeeding: I say, Why not ? you being of those who ever shut up the Kingdom, therefore Christ, his Prophets, and Apostles did ever most cry out against the False Prophets

blinde Guides and Hirelings, who in all ages withstood him, coming to his Kingdom, as you do now with the same weapons in this Generation; and Christs way is not changed, so the same wo against you is pronounced, which you must inherit.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.13)

Nayler's view of History is made explicit. History is a repetition, the Gospel is a template for contemporary existence, living personalities enact the same roles and fulfil the same structural functions as their equivalents did 1600 years before. In response to Baxter's direct accusation of Popish influence on the Quakers, Nayler retorts

I say, The Devil is not divided against himself: had we been begot by the Papists, we should have more favour from you, who are come of that Line, as having hopes to be restored to your former Kingdom, whichever stood so much in multitudes of people, that you might be Lords and Masters over them:

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.13)

Baxter's accusations of Papism are supported by doctrinal evidence and by reprinting a deposition from a Bristol ironmonger, claiming to have had first-hand contact with a Papist agitator who was associating with Quakers⁴¹². There is a marked lack of willingness to impute 'good faith' to the opponent by either side. Perhaps this is due to the supernaturally charged power of the language used. The widespread reification of such violently polarising terminology leads to a constant transformation of the concrete into the symbolic - and vice-versa - and a tendency for symbols to slip across into each other, a fact we have seen Nayler exploit already. This tendency among symbolic terms to become equivalent is only increased by their use on both sides of the dispute.

⁴¹² Lamont (*Baxter*, p.49) describes Baxter as forcing Nayler into an admission that the Pope was Antichrist (despite his own reluctance to make the identification). I cannot see that Nayler needed any forcing, he is only too willing to describe any Institutional Church in such terms. Virtually everybody is Antichrist as far as Nayler is concerned. In view of the Quaker/Papist identification Baxter pursues it is interesting to note that Quaker missionaries to Rome were imprisoned by the Inquisition, and treated as mad.

Baxter is winding up into his peroration;

There are in England a Company of raw young Professors, that have more zeal than knowledge; and there are a companie of carnal hypocrites that place all their religion in holding certain opinions, and using certain externall worship, and siding with a religious partie. It is no hard matter to deceive all these if they be not better guided by others than they are by themselves:if they are once brought to be wise enough in their own eyes, and to despise their Teachers, then they are like a man that has lost his way in a dark night, or that has lost his Guide in an unknown wilderness, or like a Dog that hath left his Master, and therefore will be ready to follow any body that first whistleth to him.

(Baxter, *The Quakers Catechism*, pp.16-17)

The comparisons become steadily less flattering. At the end, believers are compared to Dogs, and Teachers to their Masters, a relationship which would hardly content Quakers.

Baxter lists 'an abundance of Popery that the Quakers and Behmenists maintain' including the inner light, and 'the sufficiency of common revelation,' which he says 'the Papist have taught the Quakers.' (*Catechism*, p.18). 'So thou makes them up ten lies together:' replies Nayler, 'and instead of proving us headed with Fryars, thou hast proved the Devil thy head, and father;' (*An Answer*, p.13), and he continues in this vein, unleashing something of the full force of his incantatory style:

For we confess the Pope to be Antichrist, and all your Popish Clergy of his Lineage, and with Scripture we prove it; which Scripture we own, with the true Ministry and Churches, Justification by Christs righteousness, freely put and given to us; whereby our own Righteousness we deny, and set up the light within us, and witness Revelations, which the hirelings know not, therefore not common, and we witness a judge above Scripture, and before Scripture, which will not change for the Pope and all his Clergy, which we extol, and do not abstain from worldly Employments further, then by the Lord we are called, whom we prefer before all the world, which is our perfection and freedom from sin in this life, which none of the Popish Clergy can teach us, though you may talk on it; but onely the Spirit of God, which we witness, which the Devil and the hirelings never befriended.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.13-14)

The pressures of argumentation overwhelm Nayler's syntax, bursting with asides. Attempting to refute his opponent and simultaneously state his own position he juxtaposes clauses which are confusing in their relation to each other. 'which will not change for the Pope and all his Clergy, which we extol', for example, which could easily be read as extolling the Pope, and Baxter's forms of words crop up in Nayler's text, sometimes confusingly. If we did not know that Baxter accused the Quakers of 'crying up...the sufficiency of common revelation' then Nayler's 'which the Hirelings know not, therefore not common,' would seem an example of his strangeness, inexplicable and incoherent. Baxter's application of the epithet 'common' to the experience of revelation seems in itself disrespectful, but the Orthodox had become wearied by the clashing symbols of so many self-appointed Prophets. Keith Thomas, in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* and Christopher Hill in *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* both suggest that the excess of personal revelation during the Commonwealth period leads to an intellectual reaction against such forms of knowledge, and increased reliance on Rationalism and the step-by-step approach of what we now consider Science⁴¹³.

Nayler and Baxter embody the confrontation between revelation and tradition. Theirs is a clash between two opposed conceptions of the world and the Word, both of which are framed within the same discursive field. If Baxter represents control, organisation, the respect for tradition and the importance of structures, organisations and institutions, Nayler conversely stresses revelation, free-will, free grace, individual conscience and the personal knowledge of God. Such different temperamental, theological and social positions could scarcely, it seems, be contained within one Nation, let alone one Church.

⁴¹³ Hill, *Some Intellectual Consequences*, pp.82-83. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-Century England*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, (1978), pp.172, 767-800.

There is little doubt that Baxter represents the interests of (at least would-be) authority, tradition, and what's left of the status-quo; however tenuous his grip on the ledge may be, he is the man in the 'high place'. Quaker theology, on the other hand, appeals to a transcendent Authority, and a repressed, (and, in context, subversive) tradition which seeks to 'overturn, overturn, overturn' the prevailing organisation of Society. Given the intimate connection, plainly recognised, between religious and political authority, a site of the most acute contestation throughout this period, the position advanced by Nayler here, unequivocally identifying a specific and prominent Clergyman who is well connected with moderate Parliamentary interests with the Antichrist, with Popery, and with Satan - making him a representative of absolute evil at the end of time - seems from the twenty-first century to be a step beyond theology and into a dangerously political arena. Advancing such a position whilst pursuing a successful campaign of proselytisation in London and elsewhere may have been a provocation too far.

On a perhaps equally contentious level, the dispute between Baxter and Nayler, between (imprecisely) an authoritarian and nostalgic Anglicanism and a mystical Puritan individualism, in which both cite the same Scriptural authority for radically opposed social positions (rather than 'just' theoretical, theological ones) embodies a fracture in the 'monoglossia' of Biblical authority. The word, even the Word of the Lord cannot at this juncture (ever?) hold the freight of opposed aspirations to which it plays host. Language, signification, bursts under the strain, a strain of definition which shows in Nayler's syntax as he attempts to number, mark, and distinguish into specific instances the immeasurable gulf of interpretation which separates him from his antagonist.

Nayler is a close reader, picking up points of style and expression, seizing triumphantly on contradictions, and on this form of words dealing with forms of words from Baxter's 'Epistle':

I say every rational man may wel marvell that these words should be so hastily by thee called filthy railing words, who professes thyself a Minister of Jesus Christ, and the Scripture thy rule; seeing there is not one of these words, but by the spirit of Jesus Christ they have been used, to such who are in the nature to whom they belong..

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.4)

Which denotes a rather un-Quaker concern with 'the Letter', and the provenance of the 'Letter'. But Nayler's opposition to the University-educated élite of professional Ministers ('hirelings') is perhaps more to do with their assumption of superiority than their textual practices.

Whilst allowance should be made for a degree of hyperbole in the writings of their opponents, some measure of Quaker expansion can be taken from Baxter's assertion that they 'increase in London and elsewhere'. 'London' is a significant term in the debate for a number of reasons; it is the seat of Government, it is by far the largest and most important population centre, with a record of civil unrest and radical Protestantism among its inhabitants which was clear in the last period of Charles' rule, when on several occasions 'the people' (or 'the mob') besieged the Palace of Westminster either to protect Parliament from the King or demand that it should pursue specific policies, such as the executions of Strafford and Laud. Such a hotbed of Independency and free-thinking was clearly a fruitful field for the Quakers, and over the next year Nayler was to develop a reputation there as the leading Quaker preacher, entering public disputations, writing, speaking at meetings, and attracting the attention of the 'better sort'. Indeed, Nayler's period in London gained him a band of followers altogether too devoted to him, and led him into what his sober colleagues came to see as a state of 'spiritual pride'. Nayler's references to London are perhaps slightly triumphalist. He teases Baxter with his own phrase, using it twice;

especially hearing how they increase in London, and other parts.....

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.8)

and with that Light that sees thee and thy
deceit, shall we grow both in London, and other
parts, and thy refuge of lies be swept away.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.8)

From the safe distance of three hundred and fifty years I can dare to observe that the aims of the Quakers and of Richard Baxter are virtually identical. Both worked tirelessly for an inclusive, self-disciplined, Godly Nation. Where they are entirely at odds is in their cultural positions. Baxter, although not himself University educated, comes from a 'high' culture, campaigns for a (comparatively)'high' Church, and his conception of Godly order is associated with deference, ritual, hierarchy and that most ideological of productions, Art. Baxter is fond of the poetry of Herbert, and defends the singing of psalms by his congregation, which Nayler attacks as no more than a form of lying. The quote begins with a report of Baxter's 'third query'.

Whether is it more lawful for us to sing in the words of *David*, or for you to rake together all the sharp reproofes in Scripture to rail on me with; I say there is as much betwixt the lawfulness of them, as betwixt truth and a lye, for when we take Scripture language by the same spirit that gave it forth to reprove the same deceit in thee, which Christ and his Prophets and Apostles did in the chiefe Priests, Pharisees and Hirelings, then we speak truth, though thou call it railing, but when thou and thy hearers sings *Davids* words, saying, you have no scornfull eye; you have rored all the day long, your bones hath quaked, you have made your bed to swim with tears, no lyar shall dwel in your houses, &c. are not a nest of lyars all found lying together ? and he that sayes otherwise of you, is lyar like you.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.26)

Quakers are extreme in their rejection of all the established forms of Church and social life. Baxter's heart is with the social structures, he is *of* them, his way is to strive to bring them into a more perfect form. The Quakers assert that all such structures must be swept away, and Christ alone rule directly in the heart. Quakers never call

for the overthrow of Government; politics as such is beneath them. They ask that the Magistracy should behave justly, straightforward Calvinist doctrine with which Baxter would be in complete agreement, but their personal confrontations with local Magistrates show them to have been considered subversive despite this. The Quakers challenge authority wherever they go with unflinching energy. Their whole stance is predicated on this challenge. Thus Baxter and Nayler are joined in battle not so much as a consequence of their beliefs, but over their respective attitudes, and the *form* of worship. The doctrinal differences which do exist shrink when Baxter is in more ruminative mood; he is known to have felt that God extended his mercy to all who truly loved him, an 'Arminianism' which almost amounts to a different formulation of Nayler's 'Free Grace'. The argument is structural and social. One single ideological base is used to support the contrasting social prejudices of the protagonists. I do not mean by this any wholesale class judgement, although 'class' in a broad sense is clearly involved. Nayler's position in the class system is open to interpretation; he had been a farmer, and Quartermaster in the New Model Army; but as an itinerant Quaker preacher he was involved in a deliberate, unflinching and wholesale assault on the traditional bases of social hierarchy: respect for one's 'betters' in social, economic and educative terms; a settled community (so important in the Parish structure of the Elizabethan Poor Law, sustained by demonisation of the 'sturdy rogue'); the Family; and 'gainful Employment'. What is in question is more a matter of status, or *the* matter of status.

Baxter's own closeness to the Quakers is demonstrated by his refusal of a Bishopric at the Restoration in favour of a more precarious existence as a guest preacher to various London congregations. If proof of Baxter's innate conservatism is necessary, by 1673 he was willing to defend Nero in an attack on the comparative liberalism of Richard Hooker, on the grounds that 'bad government is better than

no government'⁴¹⁴. During his later imprisonment, Baxter criticises James I's *Trewe Lawe of Free Monarchie* on the grounds that it does not grant the Monarch enough Divine support, which places him to the right of a King whose conception of 'Divine Right' had caused consternation eighty years previously.

Baxter's consistent opposition to 'Papism' had marked him out for special scrutiny by then. His political adjustments under successive administrations are best seen as necessary acts of self-preservation.

Because the multitude of the needy, and the dissolute Prodigals if they were all ungoverned, would tear out the throats of the more wealthy and industrious, and as Robbers use Men in their Houses and on the Highway, so would such Persons use all about them, and turn all into a constant War.

(Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, p.736)

Such sentiments have affinities with Hobbes. Professor Lamont observes:

The solace for the faithful offered by Baxter in 1673 is only that even the most vicious tyrants are a better bet than mob rule.

(Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, p.92)

The Quakers place themselves firmly outside any putative unity Baxter can imagine. They clearly reject any notion of an Established Church. Their sheer inassimilability classes them with 'Papists' in Baxter's mind, quite apart from any doctrinal affinities. Baxter is in any case almost obsessive about Papist influence - although 'leftists' such as Sexby might organise with Papists against the Protectorate there remains not the slightest suggestion that Quakers had any involvement with political manoeuvres of this sort. Quakerism seems more a product of despair with politics, an appeal not to earthly, but to transcendental power in aid of

⁴¹⁴ William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, (1979), p.91. Hooker was one of Walwyn's favourite theologians. See also Lamont, *Baxter*, pp.103, 116, 300.

the dispossessed and unrepresented. This makes it no less of a challenge to traditional social order, not only in its refusal of deference and its attack on the remains of the Church, but because the Millenarian, eschatological transformation of political discontents brought with it a deeper challenge, and a deeper justification. What if they were right, what if they were Prophets of a new dispensation? And in a sense, they were right; what they said was in the Bible.

Interest in the 'Book of Revelation' was widespread, seemingly universal. A current of opinion took 1656 for the date of Armageddon, and expectation was high; Baxter himself later devoted years in prison to a detailed investigation of John of Patmos' disturbing allegorical vision in terms of world - which is to say church - history. His conclusions are quite different from those of the Quakers. Interest was continued in a later generation by no less a scientist than Isaac Newton. That Quakers lived within this Apocalyptic framework was the basis of their prophetic Ministry. That history did not end in 1656, nor in 1660, nor yet in 1666 did not necessarily detract from the alternative or correlative interpretation of Christ's coming, as an inward experience of his Kingdom and Majesty within the perfected individual⁴¹⁵. An important part of Quaker appeal seems to me this very indeterminacy about the nature of the Apocalypse they propose, it could be either external or internal; it could be both; it could be that the internal experience will bring about the external condition.

Baxter's use of rhetorical questions has already been noted in connection with the savage passage on page twelve; there are other examples within his text. Nayler also employs this technique with a similar shaming purpose. His initial point here is that Baxter has had Quakers imprisoned merely for speaking. The use of rhetorical questions re-enacts the

⁴¹⁵ The deep penetration of St John's prophecy into culture at this time has been usefully studied by Mark Houlihan, 'Writing the Apocalypse, 1649-1660', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, (1989). Of course, Quakers hold this indeterminacy in common with Coppe, and a wide variety of Seekers and Ranters.

control of discourse which Baxter insists on in the conduct of his Ministry, and defends by the use of coercive force.

and thou wilt see the day, Rich: Baxter, when thy deeds will come to remembrance, and thy slanders set in order, and thou shalt see to whom thou art an enemy, though now thou be wilfully ignorant of him; Were there any jot of his fear left in thee, might thou not once look back, and see thy ways to be such as none of Christs Ministers were ever found in ? Dost thou believe that ever thy works must be proved, or that thy Kingdom of Sin must come to an end? must not thy Covenant of sin be broken? though thou intend it for term of life, yet remember thy latter end: Was not ever the old Persecutors as blinde as thou art, till wrath was upon them from Heaven? must they accompt for it that do not visit him in Prison, and shall such escape as cast in Prison? Will it avail thee then to say, that thou knew not it was he? Is not this sufficient ground for thee to suspect thy way, seeing none of Christs was ever in it before? but remember now thou art warned, while thou hast time.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.4)

Nayler slips in a number of wounding accusations here, and threatens Baxter with Judgement. He describes Baxter as 'wilfully ignorant' of Christ, his tidy Worcestershire organisation as a 'Kingdom of Sin', and his theology as a 'Covenant of sin'. This last phrase deserves some explanation, expressing as it does the crucial point of Nayler's theology, perfectibility of the individual in this life. He describes Baxter's position as a 'Covenant of sin' intended 'for term of life', an attack on the Calvinist insistence on the hopeless sinfulness of fallen Man, who could only be redeemed by God's bestowal of an undeserved Grace. Nayler's 'Free Grace' is conversely available to all, providing they turn to the light within for guidance. With a sufficient 'measure' of Grace an individual may participate in Christ, and as Christ is perfect, so may Man become. This is a proposal so radically different from Calvinism's unknowable God and uncertain election for a few sinners in an eternal sweepstake that it scarcely seems to derive from the same religion. The powerful appeal of Quaker perfectibility derives from its decisive rejection of the

morbid doubt and brutal élitism of Calvinist and Particular Baptist theology.

Nayler also takes the opportunity to assert association with Christ by positive, rather than negative means, hinting at its Scriptural justification through the questions '...must they accompt for it that do not visit him in Prison, and shall such escape as cast in Prison?', where Christ's teaching is used as a direct parallel with the situation of the unfortunate Goodaire and Farnsworth, imprisoned merely for (as Nayler has it on page 6) '...speaking to thee before thy Congregation,...' He later repeats the identification; the use of repressive force is the mark of Satan.

I say, thou hast undertaken two ways to stop us, one is with lies and slanders, which thy Book is full of; and another way taken with thee and thy Generation, is to get us stopt into Dungeons and Prisons, and strait watch set, that none may come to us, nor that we may have liberty to write nor speak to any. But the latter of these is holden by you for the better weapon, yet both to no purpose, further then to prove our patience and obedience in Jesus; and yourselves of your Father, and in his works acting, that by them may ye be known, and we also.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.8)

Nayler uses a verbal link to neat effect, 'ways to stop us' transforming into 'stopt into Dungeons'. Baxter's 'Father' is of course the Devil. The passage fixes identification of persecution with righteousness, and of Civil and Clerical authority with evil, an identification that implies that the most powerful are the most wicked, and the most persecuted the most Godly. Godliest of all is Christ, who was (of course/therefore) crucified. Within a year James Nayler himself would suffer a savage punishment at the hands of a Pharisaical assembly.

those whom you have tortured, martyred and burned, whipt and imprisoned, to this day, who suffered for conscience sake, following the Lamb in their measure, them we own, and with them we suffer;.....and if these be the few Hereticks (thou tells on) that thou says were our predecessors of old : I say, We cannot but own

these in their measure, though we go under the name of Hereticks with them, by the same Generation.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.12)

Baxter's 'letter to a young unsettled Friend' uses the figure of the errant pupil to attack the Quakers and cow the reader. The passage from p.12 previously quoted, whilst bringing huge force to bear allows the uncommitted reader, the audience, a position outside this criticism, if only that of onlooker at an execution. This device allows Baxter the full reach of his condemnation without necessarily alienating anyone -except, of course Quakers. Rather than place oneself under Baxter's hammer, one is tempted to side with him.

Where Baxter stresses his superiority of judgement and expertise, Nayler generally responds with a grave sincerity, but such a position appears hard to sustain in the face of Baxter's provocations. Nayler is wounded, I think, to have the sincerity of Quaker convictions called into question. He shows himself aware of the danger he courts in a further paragraph from p.4. He himself is fast becoming the pre-eminent spokesman for a radical dissenting group more numerous than the Levellers ever were. (Reay estimates that there may have been as many as 60,000 Quakers by 1660.)

Though striving for master-hood, and vain jangling I abhor, yet for the truths sake, and the seed that is scattered, I cannot be silent, but must reprove that lying Spirit that's gone out into the World, and hath got entrance, and hath hardened many that sometimes were somewhat tender; but now hath he brought them forth against the Lamb to battle, and he hath none like these for his design, being finely covered with words, but their Works finde them out: Blessed be God for ever.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.4)

By this account Baxter's pamphlet, (one among many) was having some adverse effect on recruitment, and Nayler felt obliged to respond. Nayler draws a typical opposition between 'words' and 'Works', and his description of his opponents as being 'finely covered with words' is striking,

combining a picture of a pamphlet with a suggestion of concealment. Master-hood is to be conveyed upon him, whether he likes it or not; there seems no way Nayler could have pursued his mission without entering such a competition.

For competition it is, and the protagonists are in a rare position in English cultural history, the reins of power are not firmly in anyone's grasp; policies and constitutional arrangements are in a chaotic flux. It must really seem to each man that their words and deeds have significance in the development of new social and religious structures (if structures there must be); more, that their actions are part of a crucial, perhaps culminating moment in history. Nayler at least may well believe that he is paving the way for the end of all structures, and for a final levelling. Both men certainly see their struggle as part of the eternal struggle of good and evil, and both, of course, represent the forces of good, at least in their own eyes. In which case, this town ain't big enough for the both of us, and it is bare-knuckle fighting in the Heavyweight Championship of the Word.

Whatever Nayler's intentions, the gloves are off, and he proves himself capable of social satire with a class edge. In response to Baxter's passing assault on 'Separatists and Anabaptists', Nayler produces an attack on the quality of congregation which the rump of the Established Church can now boast of, since the 'godly' have separated from it.

I desire not to be busie in other mens matters;
onely this, whereas thou casts it on the
separated people, to be nurseries of impiety,
and Infidels : I say, thou dost but here
manifest thy shameless Spirit who matters not
what thou sayest of others, so thou may but seek
thy own praise; for all that know any thing of
the fear of God, knows, that most of these
people have separated from you Parish Teachers,
upon this very account (to wit) your infidelity
and impiety: and if any among them turn so
grossly filthy, that they cannot keep them
amongst them, lest it should shame their
religion; yet they return to you, who forthwith
receive them, and boast of them as rare
Converts; nay none so bad in their conversation,

but if they have but either Pig or Goose, or ought to be got towards hire, they are yours, and you are their masters; such as no one Sort of the people in the Nation will joyn with, but onely you, Parish Teachers.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.9)

reinforcing the impression he has already created of such a flock;

I say, Some of your churches are so emptied, that you have few left to hear you, but prophane persons, swearers, oppressors, drunkards and fighters, such as beat in your synagogue, and these are become your prime hearers: but canst thou not see thy confusion, who in thy last was saying, We multiply where we come, and now Its but the Churches of the Separatists and Anabaptists: then, why cries thou out of so much danger? doth not thy speech bewray thee?

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.7)

and all this invective despite his commitment to a levelled conception of humanity.

What Generation thou art of, who holds the persons of any contemptible, is easily judged by any who have that spirit, which respects no mans person, but from that Spirit you are grossly erred:

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.7)

These passages lead up to the teasing references to Quaker expansion in London, and other parts, and Nayler is not afraid to make much of Quaker successes in their campaign of conversion.

And for our multiplying, that must increase to thy torment, and all *Babylons* Merchants, for God is multiplying his seed as the Stars of Heaven, though *Gog* and *Magog* be gathered against it, yet to the brightness of his rising shall the Nations come, and the desire is kindling now after the shakings, *Isa.6.3 Hag.2.7.* and the Lamb hath set up his standard, whereat all the beasts of the field rage; yet he will take the victory; and for thy salvation thou tells on, what dost thou intend to save them from, who art preaching up sin as long as they live?

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.7)

The rejection of hierarchy is based on the notion that all are equal before God. To respect no man's person is not to hold any contemptible, on the contrary, all are capable of perfection.

Nayler seeks to speak only from the Spirit, but this is not possible. Other voices constantly intrude; especially Baxter and his 'rage'. The need to rebut is intimately involved with the desire to compete.

QUAERIES

As I come to the 'Quaeries', it is not my intention to proceed through them in an orderly manner, I prefer to bring together passages which concentrate on the same theme. Chief among Nayler's targets is the Established Church, an institution sustained and made possible by tithes. His most detailed and far-reaching policy statement about the tithe system and the churches it supports comes just before the 'Quaeries' section, on page fifteen;

Whoever hath but heard of the Blood that hath been shed, and the violence done to the Innocent by your Fore-fathers, the Popish Clergy, before they was denyed in the Nation; also what Blood hath been shed, and misery undergone, to bring down your power set up in the Presbytery in *Scotland* and *England*, the two last of these, which we can witness by sad experience: I say, here's small hopes for any that loves God, or their souls or bodies either, or the Peace of the Nation, to labour in bringing forth such a birth of Vipers; nay, we rather rejoyce, to see the work begun thus far in the Nation, whereby he will rid us of the rest of that brood, and their burthens, which is the greatest repression which remains in the Nation, though this must be done with suffering, as the other was done with acting; the Lord having drawn forth many to that purpose, against whom you are gathered, as the sand for multitude, yet are we not dismayed, though beset on every side, yet not destroyed, for we know him in whom we have believed.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.15)

This is an explicit statement of intent, from a battle-hardened warrior. 'Their burthens' are tithes, of course. Nayler says that their abolition must be achieved through 'suffering' rather than 'action', and seems to glory in his

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position as 'beset on every side'. Nevertheless, this is fighting talk. If those in power seriously believe in the importance of a National Church as an agent of social control - and the Elizabethans did, and Baxter certainly does - then they will have recognised in these words a threat from a determined enemy. In fact, those in power, Cromwell and Parliament in some uncertain form of partnership, are as much interested in Religious questions as Nayler and Baxter themselves. Nayler is drawn back to the subject of tithes during the 'Quaeries'.

suppose that be granted, that a man may freely give his own to God; must the hireling therefore take mens goods, against their wills, to maintain such a Ministry and Worship as God never set up, but is denied by him, and all that he ever sent; nor did the Apostles put the price of other mens Lands into their purses, but it was distributed to such as had need;

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.18)

4.Quaery, If our Ancestors having given to the Church the Tenths, are not those Church-robbers that now take them away? I say, if my Father had given the Tenth Land in my field to the hireling, then had he given his own, and no right had I to have gainsayed that he should have given what was his, but that he could give the tenth Sheaf, Pig, Goose or Egg, which is Gods blessing and the fruits of my labors, and never was his, that I deny, and he is the thief that takes the fruits of another mans labors against his will; for if I sow no corn, thou hast no sheaf, and if I have no Sow, thou hast no pig, &c. so if my labors you take, which never was my Fathers: but who gave you money out of Servants wages, and for smoke passing up peoples Chimneys, Crysomes and Mortuaries, and such like, which you had all from your Ancestor the Pope, from whom you had your first life, Tythes, and maintainance.....and this Spiritual Courts to force people to work for you, that you might be sure to have enough, whosoever wanted, and since those fell, you have been hard put to it, and sore afraid you are, least the earthly powers should leave you, for if they do, your Gospel will starve you, such is the fruits of your plowing and sowing, and so your maintainance is as ancient as the Man of Sin, and no elder, and you must fall together as you have stood together.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.19)

This is a strong and interesting passage. It embodies a working man's consciousness of the value of his own labour, and advances theoretical grounds for the inadmissibility of tithes. 'If I sow no corn, thou hast no sheaf' is a delightfully simple and accurate expression of the position. The list of 'Sheaf, Pig, Goose or Egg', in descending order, as it were, is beautifully weighted. The agricultural imagery is revisited when Baxter is admonished 'your Gospel will starve you, such is the fruits of your plowing and sowing'. 'Ancestor' is not forgotten either, it is one of Baxter's words, set out in his Query. Nayler appropriates it, it has a nasty ring to his ear, I suspect, and returns it to its owner, asserting that Baxter is the Pope's spiritual son. The reference to the 'Man of Sin' links the Pope and Antichrist. There is a good deal of semi-legal logic in Nayler's position here, it is a sensible and well-argued case based on a conception of natural justice. However, if applied broadly it would abrogate the basis of any form of Government for rationalist constitutionalists such as Hobbes who suggest that the basis of Society is contractual, and that it is an inherited agreement. It is the proposal of an Anarchist.

The vehemence of Nayler's attack on Churches leads to an outbreak of typographical explosions in this section from page twenty-nine:

but the Temple of Christ is made without hands,
and there he dwells, and not in Temples made
with hands, hast thou a face to father those
upon Christ, wherein you generation of blood-
suckers have worshipped in them ever since they
was builded? do not they stand witnesses against
you, that you are the children of them who slew
the Martyrs, and now are found beating in the
same SYNAGOGUES, and shedding Blood as far as
you can get the same power by which they did it,
CHRIST had never such TEMPLES, stop thy MOUTH
for SHAME. And thou goes on, and where thou
cannot deny but thou art in the steps of the
PHARISEES yet says thou, I do not love it, they
loved it to be called Master, &c. but I do not;
wel, thou sayes in words thou loves it not, but
come to thy practise, and it will appear that
thou who art but one, hast made more lyes and
crooked ways to uphold it in this thy book, then

all the generations of thy fathers the Pharisees did that ever was before thee, and dost thou think to cover all this by saying thou loves it not, but you have used so long to lead the blind, that you would put out the eys of them that see, & thou says it was the pharisees pride that was condemned, I say so it is your pride that is your condemnation

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.29)

Nayler certainly seems enraged at this point. That the Pharisees were 'condemned' is perhaps only a matter of disapproval; 'condemnation', however, concerns eternal roasting in the sulphurous pit.

The topic of Church organisation and practice coincides with that of the behaviour of the Clergy. Not only are they out of the way of Christ in terms of their religious practices, they are found to be persecutors of those who criticise their position. From Nayler's perspective, of course, this means the Quakers, although he does also have some sympathy for the 'Separatists and Anabaptists' who are similarly on the receiving end of Baxter's strictures.

Baxter asks why the Quakers do not complain of the Spanish Inquisition, but Nayler replies

I say, we are asking it of the same generation of Priests: who have all along been the cause of shedding that innocent blood, where they could prevail with the powers of the earth, to act their bloody ends under religious pretences, calling that heresie which crosses their lusts, as its well known, You cease not to presse the power to it[s] full, and prevail as far as you can, and where you can, and have used many waies secretly and openly, to undermine them where you cannot, and where the Magistrate is not ready to execute your designs, you have some of the baser sort ready with you, that will do it at your commands: as some of you Priests have set them on, saying, fight lads for the Gospel. Nay, I can make it appear of above 30 of you, who have fought with your own hands, many of them to the shedding of much blood, even by the highway, when the innocent have passed by.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.18)

Baxter is taken as representative of the actions of all 'Parish Teachers'. Standing up publicly for one's convictions can carry a heavy price. Baxter himself was to be imprisoned twice in the next 30 years, despite his clear self-association with the forces of law and order.

And to plead for this mastership further thou sayes...that the disciples of the sect-masters of the Pharisees, so gloryed in their masters, that they were ready to go by the ears, and kill one another, and this thou would send us to see among them as a strange business, which we see daily amongst you and your disciples, how many Sects and Sect-masters is amongst you Priests and your Disciples, and have been all by the ears as thou calls it, even unto blood, til you have vented all your envie against the Lamb of Christ, as they did then, though thou would put it far off, yet we see it here present

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.30)

The refrain 'though thou would put it far off, yet we see it here present' might almost be Nayler's credo as a social historian. In response to one of Baxter's own queries, Nayler fulminates

I say railing we deny, and speak the truth against those we find out of the doctrine of Christ, who are one with drunkards & swearers, Whoremongers, and sensual wretches, and whose Church & hearers is made up of many such, and who by such are upholden, maintained, and defended, who fight for such a Ministry with clubs, and stones, and stocks, and these are of the same spirit with them and on their side, against the servants of God, beating in their Synagogues, and hailing out, as they ever did the ministers of truth

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.38)

The Church has always persecuted, Nayler says, and now it is Baxter's turn

and now it is falne into your hands, who are garnishing their Sepulchers, crying out against your fathers, the Popes, and the Bishops, for their cruelty, but are found deeper in it to your power than ever they was, scarcely ever ceasing to stir any authority of the nation against the Lamb, and his Light where it is made manifest; yea many of your generation not finding the Magistrate so ready to execute your bloody designs, as you would have them, have

shed blood with your own hands, even of the innocent, and they are not a few that are guilty hereof, in the north parts of this Nation
(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.47)

There is some justice to this claim. Those who have established or are called to maintain an orthodoxy are highly likely to wish to impose it on those who disagree. A crisis of this sort broke out between Nayler and the Quakers late in 1656.

you are in the same work, and would silence all the appearance of God had you power, exceeding all the Bishops herein, having persecuted and imprisoned more in one years space, than the Bishops did in ten; and for such truths declaring, as the Bishops would have been ashamed to have imprisoned for, yea some of you Priests, proceeding to blood, with your own hands, being more exceedingly mad than ever your fathers was, who would pretend a law for that which they did, but you have none for many things that you do, so you are acted by the same spirit, but exceedingly heightened in rage, more than they ever was.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.30)

Nayler proposes a depersonalising view of human action here, in the phrase 'you are acted by the same spirit'. Free will is reduced here to a sort of possession. Baxter (or his fellow Clergy) do not act, but are 'acted by' the eternal spirit of persecution. Whereas I see these recurrences of human behaviour as structural and social, Nayler understands the same recurrence in terms of the eternal struggle between God and the Devil. Both views are probably forms of that seemingly unavoidable human shorthand we call reification.

The violence of the Clergy is taken as a form of recurrence by Nayler, he sees it as part of the template of Biblical history. Baxter too makes use of historical precedent to justify or explain his position, asking whether the Quakers are not persecuting the Clergy just as the heathen and the Arian had done. Nayler thinks otherwise, and his reasoning is based on the relative social positions of the protagonists.

I say no; not like them, no more than the sufferer is like the persecutor, and therein was the difference and is the difference, they suffered in obedience to that measure of light in their times, and we suffer in obedience to the light of Christ in these times, they suffered by the chiefe Priests in their times, who had got power from the Magistrate; and we suffer by the chiefe Priests who have got power from the Magistrate, and it is not the name of Pope, Bishop, or Priest, that makes just such, or not such, but the practise wherein they are found, and such are the servants of God, who are found in the work of God, & such are the servants of the Devil, who are found persecutors
(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.39-40)

This belief is one with Nayler's picture of the world, so conditioned by the superimposition of a metaphor, a hermeneutic, an ideology, a theory, on the face of events.

I say Christ has enlightened every one that comes into the World, which *Ball*, and thou, and many of thy generation, being exceedingly mad, with envy and rage, running in your own wills, and acting against it, your light is become Darkness, and so great is that darkness, that you are reproaching, persecuting, and killing the people of God now, as he was then, and think you do God service, yet is the Light in Darkness, though Darkness comprehends it not;
(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.46)

Nayler uses Baxter's formulations against him in this passage in typical style, the phrase 'think they do God service', and the words 'killing' and 'reproaching' are both drawn from Baxter's query. Baxter is quite unfair, of course, to complain of the Quakers 'killing' anybody, since Nayler has made it clear that his aims are to be achieved through suffering rather than through violence, but Quaker provocations are determined, deliberate and organised, and Baxter is of a mind to feel persecuted.

Nayler's test is constantly one of practice and not words. He believes that the Quaker message 'strikes at the Root' (p.40), and that

therefore we think it not strange to see your rage greater, if you had power, then theirs was, and it is you that justifies the bloody

opposers, and condemns the Saints afresh, as may be seen in the Goals [sic] of the Nation, whom you have imprisoned, not having yet an opportunity for blood, and here you are found in the practise that the popish Priests was in, persecuting and not suffering.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.44 (marked 40))

When Baxter accuses the Quakers of bearing the visible image of the Devil, Nayler responds with a catalogue of practices he sees the Clergy following the Pharisees and persecutors in. He does not accuse the godly, he says, no more than did the Apostles and Prophets, but

such as walked contrary to God, and to speak the same words to the same generation that are found in the same works by the same spirit, is the same to God, as it was then, and the same to that generation, who are found in their works, if not, prove when it was changed, else thou art the accuser of the bretheren, and that falsely.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.41)

the five uses of 'same' reinforce Nayler's conception of recurrence, the most notable pair being 'same words/same works', where, as often before, Nayler constructs an opposition between pairs of terms which bear a similarity of sound or form to one another. This is a pervasive feature of his style. In response to a query from Baxter about their 'commission' to preach, Nayler responds

Our call and commission is invisible as to you, as ever it was to the world, yet herein it is showed that we are found in the same practise and suffering, that all the Saints of God ever was, for declaring against the false worships, and this we refuse not to show in the midst of your envy, in the patience of Christ and his long suffering, in the midst of your bloody persecution, and here is your commission shewed also, and from whom you have it, even him that is within you who is known by his fruits outward, a murderer from the beginning so is the Spirit of God by its fruits outward, a sufferer from the beginning, so each tree is known by its fruit, whatsoever you tell us, and thats the sot which cannot see it nor believe it.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.46)

Nayler reaffirms the connection of Godliness with persecution, a feature of his thought I have previously

asserted as dangerous, if only to himself. Baxter himself introduced the insulting tone Nayler echoes here, with his query 16, (to which the above excerpt is Nayler's reply), which begins 'Is it not a most sottish trick of you to go up and down prating and commanding.....'. Baxter's tone is unchristian, and Nayler is by no means shy of responding in kind. He is particularly willing to turn Baxter's insults back on him. Nayler's response to the nineteenth Query includes a threat of revenge on the persecutor. Baxter repeats a previous observation that the Quakers seem to believe that 'Christ came into the world and shed his blood to gather onely a few raging quakers in England.' (p.46). Nayler responds thus: 'yet he is not come to save a few raging quakers only, but with ten thousand of his saints he is come to be avenged of that bloody Generation:'

Nayler is not concerned only with negative proofs of Quaker righteousness, however (that they are persecuted by the powerful), but also with their positive doctrines. Parts of the tract are devoted to the defence of Perfectibility, for example, and parts deal with the internal Light by which people must come to Christ, and with the vision and mission which Quakers feel they have from God.

when he was come, then the Gospel was preached to every *Creature* under Heaven; then all was called to repent, and wait for the Kingdom of God, which was at hand within them, which they did not know who denyed the light, yet the light being come into the world, was their condemnation;...for as many as received the light, to them he gave power to become the Sons of God, to the rest is condemnation.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.21)

Nayler pours scorn on Baxter's theological position

Thou blind sot, Can any come to know God but by the Spirit? and where wilt thou have this Spirit if not within? Can he be any of Christs who hath not his Spirit? or can any unclean thing stand before God, or come in his sight? But if any witness this Spirit, and sanctification by it, thy filthy mind calls it pride. Blush for shame! Did ever any but the Devil, minister against having the Spirit, or freedom from sin? How art

thou afraid thy fathers Kingdom should fall: Yet being told of this, thou calls it railing, as thy fore-fathers would ever in the Devils work, but would not be called his Children;

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.21)

And he defends the Quaker theory of Perfectibility through an attack on Baxter's 'Covenant', which he now describes as being with the Devil.

5.*qu.* Thou asks if it will be for the peoples profit, to despise their Teachers and guides? I say you who have despised Christs commands to set up your own lusts, and pride, covetousness, and false-worship, must be despised, and when such guides are discovered, then shall the people profit when they come to be guided with that spirit God hath given to every man to profit withal, which thou will keep them from as long as you can; that you may fill up your measure, and wrath come upon you to the uttermost, being captivated by the Devil soul and body, the God of this world having blinded the eye, so that the Gospell is hid from you, and you lost, setting up the Letter instead of it, having denyed the light, and erred from it, are got up into hardness of heart, imprisoning, beating, and making havock like mad beasts, whatever the devil did where he reigned, so do you, being the head of the Serpent, which Christ is come to bruise, as he did in his own person so he is the same forever to the same brood, who now are found in the same bloody plots against the seed of God, worse than ever any, seeking the lives of others, for practicing that in life which you in words will preach for money, such a generation of raging beasts was never yet in the world, who seek to devour on every side of you, and who departs from sin is your prey, the greatest deceivers that ever yet come; now when you come to be revealed, who would have believed that you, who have had so many millions of pounds for teaching people to forsake sin, and now if any declare that he has forsaken it and is set free, you preach it down as the most dangerous error that ever was, and cry out to drunkards, swearers, thieves and murderers, and whoremongers, come not near them least you be deceived, and now get up more money for preaching up sin while the world stands, than you took for preaching it down, yet if we tell you, you are bringing people into Covenant with the Devil for tearm of life, you say we rail on you when you have begot the faith of that Covenant in the whole nation, ask any that believes your teaching, if they believe that Christ is able to redeem them from committing

sin in this world, and presently they are ready to give an account of their faith, nay none can be free here, but when they are dead in another world they shall, so the faith and covenant is sutable for no less time then till men can sin no longer, and if any have broke this Covenant through the righteous Covenant, they are ready to stone him, yet least thou should be seen in this filth, you cast a mist before the simple, saying you must strive after perfection and freedom, and purity, and to be set free from sin, but once, knowing that unbelief is in the bottome, there is little danger of freedom, for the Devil whose work you are doing, knows fulwel that if he can but have people to believe they cannot be free, he knows they are safe with him for ever comming at it, no faith, no obtaining, according to every mans faith so shall it be unto them, and that striving which is not in faith to obtain, is selfe-righteousness, but who believes that Christ is able to save to the uttermost? all that come to God by him shall see it so, but this the blind knows not,

(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.27-28)

This is an excessively long citation, but the argument is consistent and builds in power to the extent that I could not bring myself to interrupt it. Even at this point I am not sure that we have reached a full-stop in the argument; we certainly have not in the punctuation. The passage embodies a blistering attack on Calvinist doctrine which exposes the complexity and psychological difficulty of the position that it advances. It accuses Priests in general (it begins with the singular 'thou', but soon moves to the general 'you') of duplicity, and accuses them of taking 'millions of pounds' for preaching against sin and further millions ('more money.....than you took for preaching it down') for teaching that it is unavoidable in life. Nayler sees Calvinism as a cruel and deceitful doctrine, a doctrine of despair. Not only this, but he claims to have been made free from sin in this life by experience of Christ. Indeed, he is certain of it, and dismisses those who have not shared his experience as 'blind'.

A further section on page 35 repeats the basis of these theological accusations, this time describing Calvinism as '.....this Covenant of hel and death.....', but the more

interesting passage comes later, when Nayler concentrates on Perfectibility itself, rather than attacking Baxter.

I say by grace we are saved, which we have received of God which teacheth us to speak the truth, by which truth we are set free, so far as we know him, and so far we declare our freedome, according to our measures, and he that sees himselfe set free from all sin by that power, and brought wholly unto Christ, where there is no sin, selfe-shame, the body of sin put off, and nothing living in him but the life of Christ, if he declare this to his praise, he is no lyar, and if such an one abide in Christ he sinneth not, neither doth such an one say he hath no knowledge of Christ, nor need of the Physician, nor that he will not be beholding to him for his blood, or to make intercession, neither doth he deny that he hath sinned, but confesses to his praise who hath him cleansed according to his measure, nor is this to say he will not be beholding to God any more, who stands by faith in his power, and is beholding to him daylie, and to his blood dayly, which as it hath washed so keeps pure from horrid railing, slandering, and other wickedness, thy swearing, and drinking thou speaks on; and this is to confess Christ come in the flesh, the just man on Earth that does good and sins not, who is greater than *Solomon*

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.42)

Nayler here, in response to allegations of Ranter-like behaviour, asserts the purity of Quaker life and belief, and the miraculous properties of association with Christ. His most extreme formulation here is 'and this is to confess Christ come in the flesh, the just man on Earth who sins not', which combines both a complete identification of Christ and believer and threatens the Apocalypse; Christ will not return in the flesh until the day of judgement. The identification of Christ and believer was the 'crime' for which Nayler was to be tried and punished. The threat which underlay this identification was the total breakdown of authority. Society cannot operate if its members live in the expectation of imminent Apocalypse. The widespread adoption of such a philosophy threatened (and quite explicitly) the entire basis of public order.

Nayler also explicitly connects the rise of Quakerism with the collapse of censorship, a relaxation or abandonment which is the only reason that we have any record of such heterogeneous opinions emanating from the lower classes. Such opinions may have been current before this period, but we are in no position to know. The breakdown of ruling-class monopoly over the production of texts allows us this temporary window on different views.

you have lost your old way of stopping preaching and printing, and now your slandering your Popery upon other mens backs, will but cause all to see you more plainly: people are now grown so wise as they begin to know the tree by its fruit; your words will not serve, your covering growes thin, it must be rent, and your refuge of lies are a sweeping away, your rowing in your own filth doth but cast dung in your own faces: the truth is living and pure, and will clear it self, and all that abide in it, but shame shall cover the wicked.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.24)

There are more views than one, however, visible through this window, and Nayler rebuts the accusation of 'Ranterism'.

And thou calls the Ranters our bretheren, but they are your bretheren and hearers, they come not amongst us, unless it be to oppose, as you do;

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.24)

In consideration of where these views might have sprung from, Baxter alludes to the 'Gnostic' controversies, and to the mysterious figure of Simon Magus. The Gnostic parallel seems well drawn, perhaps chief among early Christian complaints about the 'Gnostics' is that they believe in further revelations, and Christians believe that Christ has already fulfilled the prophecies, and delivered God's full and final word.

is not God very patient that causeth not the earth to open and swallow you up quick, as it did them? do you understand that the *Simonians* (or disciples of *Simon Magus*) and the *Nicholaitians*, whose Doctrine and deeds Christ hateth, Rev.2 and other gnostick hereticks in

the Apostles dayes did deal by them and the
Church then as you do by us now;
(Baxter, in Nayler, *An Answer*, p.47)

Nayler is ready to acknowledge Simon Magus, and does not seem intimidated by the historical precedent, indeed, he seems to know about 'Simonianism' and its doctrines, surely a fairly specialised knowledge.

and thy spirit we understand to be worse than
Simon Magus, for he believed in the light of the
Gospel, but thou denyest it, and he would have
bought the gift which thou would sel if thou
hadst it, neither had he a hand in such works of
envy against the Truth, as thou and thy
generation are found in
(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.47-48)

Nayler makes also a Blakeian or Coppeian identification with the Spirit and against 'sense and order' in this passage which deals with Baxter's practice of 'study'

nor do we make your study your crime, but your
whole worship, which by the Doctrine of Christ
we deny, and for thy more sense and order which
thou boasteth on, then we that boast of the
Spirit, I say we have nothing else to boast on
but that Spirit which was always counted madness
and disorder to thy generation, and thats the
Spirit of Truth, which with thy sense and
sensual wisdom thou reproachest, and this is
the end of thy study, as appears in thy paper.
(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.39)

This leads me on to the question of the Quaker's calling, which is the result of vision, not of reason. Some mention has been made of this already, in comparisons of the two 'Ministries' or 'Commissions' these men represent. Nayler makes a clear statement of his sense of mission in this passage:

We are sent to declare that Light which is
sufficient, which we witness within us, and to
draw people from that hellish darkness into
which the blinde guides have led them, and from
all the dark worshippes set up in the
imaginations unto the light of life, which is
only sufficient; which bears witness in them
against all the Deeds of Darknes, showing what
is to be reproved and what is wrought in God,

Eph.5.13. Iohn3.21. so to turn people to that Light and Spirit of Truth, which leads into all Truth, is the end of our Teaching, and the enemy of hellish Darkness, and that Spirit is in them, and they shall know it who turn to it.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.45)

Nayler denies that any true Minister is called by men, the true Ministry is from God. He triumphantly picks up a misprint or confusion in Baxter's text where he quotes 'Mat.28.21' against the Quakers. Nayler responds

which Chapter hath not 21. verses in, but there is not one verse in that chapter, nor in all the book, that sayes the Apostles was to leave such an order to the end of the world, so that a verse beyond number is fittest to quote for such a ly, but what Apostle was that who left order with the Pope, from whom all the Parish Teachers both in this Nation and many more, have had their ordination and holy order, since the Popes time he says from *Peter*, and if thou say so too I shall not believe you, till I see better proof than yet thou hast quoted, but thou proceeds to deny any to expect a call from Heaven, and the figures of thy call thou sets down

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.33)

Baxter gives seven criteria for his calling, all of which Nayler rejects as either irrelevant or undermined by Baxter's theology and practice. He then continues:

These seven sayest thou set together, are the signs of Christs call, and thy mission, shew you the like if you can; to which I say, never any of Christs Ministers shewed the like, nor do I neither: and thou tells the old taile over again, that no immediate call since the Apostles, which thou never proved yet, and thou concludes; wil not all this suffice? I say those who know not the Scriptures nor the power of God may trust thee and be sufficed with a lye, but who knows either, sees whence thou art;

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.33)

This question of the calling to the Ministry is a considerable bone of contention between the two, with neither able to prove to the other's satisfaction that they have a true commission from God. Nayler draws a sharp contrast between the position of the Ministers of the Church and the Quaker Ministry.

I say those are true ministers and ever was, who wandred to and fro, having no certain dwelling-place, of whom the world was not worthy, who ever bore witness against the false Prophets that bear rule by their means, and the Priests that preached for hire, and the people that loved to have it so, and whose manner was to go into the Synagogues, and Idols temples to disprove the hirelings false worship, and call people from them to the true shepheard; and you may find many of these in the most prisons of the nation for so doing, by your means, against whom we are sent to witness, and these have been banished to and fro, (since the mystery of iniquity, and the popish priesthood was set up)⁴¹⁶ into corners, but now are come to light, to witness against the mystery of iniquity, therefore do the heathen rage, the man of sin and all his ministers, because his end is near.
(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.27)

Nayler's Blakeian, perhaps Gnostic vision is championed in this next passage, where Baxter rejects such mysticism, and is sharply rebuked for it. This internalisation of Biblical events and symbols as means of explaining psychological events is typical of Quaker practice.

13.*qu.* What is the Flaming Sword that keeps the Tree of Life & the Cherubims? and this thou answers with calling it a foolish question, and adds a lie to it, saying, we have not seen it, thou sayes it shall suffice thee to know there is such a thing (which knowledge is no more in thee but hearsay) but the sight thou puts far off into the world to come, and the Tree of Life also, for thou that never saw the Flaming Sword & Cherubims, never came near the Tree of Life, but as I said before feeds upon death, thy own cursed carnall knowledg, which God hath forbidden.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.29)

For my final thematic group, I take as a focus the opposition Quakers draw between the Letter and the Word. Quakers demonstrate a clear distrust of the 'dead letter', choosing (as can be seen above) to stress the primacy of the direct revelation of the Spirit. This 'Gnostic' attitude is unassailable, there is no basis on which an internal

⁴¹⁶ I have moved a bracket here, in order, I hope, to make the sense clearer. In the text it comes after 'set'.

conviction can be challenged, one of the factors which makes Baxter so annoyed. This is clear in Walwyn's account of his faith. Reason, logic, sense and tradition are all deemed irrelevant by the Quakers, who hold fast to the essential truth of revelation.

what religion is thine that cannot bear it, to say the Spirit is infallible? Where must the infallibility be, in your Church, or in the Letter, or in you Priests? It is likest thou intends the last: because you would bind all to believe your meanings, but when thou writes again, deal plainly, and tell us where thou would have it, since it must not be in the Spirit. But to the Answer, thou says, the Prophets and Apostles, were guided infallibly in the manner and matter: so that what they writ to the Church was true; but thou hast no such infallibility. I say, if thou had such a Spirit, your pulpits would have more truth, and thy Book not so full of lies as it is, but wilt thou call it railing, if I tell thee, that thou who hast not that Spirit, hast the Spirit of the Devil? If thou do, yet the truth is no less; for the Spirit of God is but one, and who hath it, hath an infallible guide, in matter and manner if he keep to it. And he that is not guided by this, hath the Spirit of Satan, and I know that so far as any are led by the Spirit, it guides into all truth if it be not erred from.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.21-22)

Baxter's ownership of Biblical discourse is interrogated here, in Nayler's complaint that 'you would bind all to your meanings'. The harsh dichotomy of the Quaker rhetoric which distinguishes only two Spirits is firmly driven home. Who can distinguish the two? For Nayler, only those with the Spirit of God.

14.*qu.* Whether the Bible be the Word of God? and *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John* the Gospel? and whether there were any Gospel before them? and whether they be the light? and to this thou gives not answer, but tells of a temporal Word; so much thou knows of that word which endures for ever, and a word that is a sign of Gods mind, and such confused stuffe, and tells of a different sense betwixt Christ, the Scriptures; and thou sayes it was written that it might be a standing rule, and kept intire, and sure; to the worlds end; but how often have you and your generation altered this rule? insomuch as scarce two of you can agree about it: what is the

meaning of it, and how many Copies is there of it? which of them is the standing rule? that which stands most sutable to your wills and pleasures, and how intire is it kept, when much of it is quite lost; but thou might have said of it, as of the infallible Spirit, if the letter be not it, thou hast none thou knows on, that had been plaine dealing; and thou sayes this word is the Light, but not as Christ is the Light, or the Spirit, for there are many lights, and so with thy many lights thou shews thyself to be ignorant of the one light the Scriptures speaks of, which holds out but one light and word, but thou hast many in the dark-lanthorn of thy imaginations, not one like another, and so imagines that Christ, the Spirit, and the Word are not one, nor enlightens all alike; sayest thou, mans reason is the eye, and the Gospel is externall, and the Spirit closeth these two together, and so breedeth a spirituall illumination, which the word alone could not procure, whereas the Scriptures witness the word, by which alone all externalls were made, and the word for reconciling again and making new: but sayest thou, the word without reason and externalls cannot produce; and this is thy word thou preaches, and so it seem by what it produces.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.22-23)

'the dark-lanthorn of thy imaginations', with its suggestions of illusion and concealment, ignorance and deception, is a subtle image. Nayler's self-sufficient and simple view of the identity of all reference to the 'word', or 'light' in the Bible is striking, and reminiscent of Ranter Laurence Clarkson's conflation of all Biblical lights in *A Single Eye* (1650)⁴¹⁷. He allows none of Baxter's subtleties of interpretation. The attack on Biblical controversy is well made, since Quakers believe the Letter is insufficient without the guidance of the Word, Light, or Spirit, which is Christ, revelation and vision. Nayler clearly recognises that the Text is itself unstable, contested, a site of interpretation and dispute. No text can ever be stable, 'a standing rule'. The only unchanging elements in life are the structural opposition of repressor and repressed, and the Spirit and Worship of Christ, which does not change, in 'matter or manner'. The unchanging Word of God is not the Bible, which is merely the Letter, and

⁴¹⁷ In *C.R.W.*, pp.161-175.

open to argument, but Christ, who can be known only directly. Baxter's reasonable assertion that the Gospel 'is external' meets with no agreement from Nayler, who insists that the Gospel is Christ, and that Christ is internal and eternal, unchanging, preceding the Letter and Creation itself. Nayler identifies the Word that was in the beginning with Christ.

Thy 2.qu. Will we give you leave to smell the Pope, in our endeavours to disgrace the Scriptures though your nose be stopt: I say, were thou not stark blind and drunck with envie, thou might see thine own confused scornfull spirit, with which thou hast discovered thy folly, who one while will have the word temporall, and another while to endure forever, and to prove the Bible to be the Word, brings, *the word is in the heart*, but no wonder thou be blind, who says mans reason is the eye.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.25)

The 'eye' is a significant term in the Quaker lexicon, representing perception of truth, the human counterpart of the Divine 'light'. Here Nayler firmly dismisses the notion that it can be equated with 'reason'. Both writers use sense organs as metaphors for spiritual or intellectual perceptions. Thus, for Baxter, the Pope can be smelled (perhaps incense?), but to Nayler, Baxter is blind.

thou begins to wrangle with the command of Christ that forbids thy master-hood, saying; is not many words in the Scriptures translated master, of as low and humble importance as ruler, I say the words of Christ was ever in the way of the Hirelings, and Pharisees, and Priests, and their pride, but they could not get them removed, though they was vext at them and would not have them applyed to them no more than thou, but let his words alone, thou must not wrest them out of their place and power, thou canst not bow them but must bow to them, they was given to break thee and thy pride, and not to be broken by thee nor thy teachings.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, pp.26-27)

So Nayler, although such a fierce opponent of the Letter here demands adherence to it, despite Baxter's more subtle appreciation of the history and indeterminacy of the Text. There is another passage concerning the Word and the Letter which makes plain *from the Letter* that the Letter is not the

Word. What this means, exactly, for the value of the Letter, I cannot make out. The underlying theory, as with Coppe, is that mere interpretation of the Letter without the understanding of the Spirit will lead to error. It is not easy to decide who may be in possession of such an understanding, except from our own understanding, which is as likely to be false as anyone else's.

thou that denies God to be the word, and sayes the Letter is the Word, art ignorant both of the word and Scriptures, as plainly they shall witness against thee, which sayes, *God is the word*, and the Word of God is the name of Jesus, as the Scripture declareth, but never takes that name to its selfe; *And the word of God endures for ever*: and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached, which is not the Letter; and thou that knowest not Christ within thee, art the Infidel and Reprobate thou speaks on, who hath nothing to do with the name of a Christian, who art adding thy lyes and slanders, as though only we limited Christ within us, because we witness him in us, so with the Scripture thou art proved to be ignorant of them, and the power of God; from which they were written.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.43)

I close with a further quotation from Nayler which deals with the textual instability of the Bible and also with the divide he perceives so clearly between the words and practices of the professional Clergy. One particular device Nayler uses in this intense close reading is a contrast in numbers which is intended to show Baxter's textual practice as both corrupt and giving rewards above its value; 'two or three consequences and meanings' equal 'four or five hundred a yeer'.

it is not words we contend about, but your whole practise, which being found in, words and meanings cannot hide you, and if the Scriptures be not right translated as thou pleads, then is less confidence to be put in any of you who had it in doing, yet thou sayes its a standing rule; thus Babylons Children are clashing against one another, but all against the Stone, by which we see your fruits to be the same with the Pharises, change the letter as often as you will, wo to him that hath no other guide and rule but that which you have so often chopt and changed, and not still wil it please you, thou you may well call it a temporall word; for you will make it serve all times, or you must want of

your wils; its no hard thing with you to take Pauls words, who wandered up and down in hunger and nakedness, coveted no mans money nor gold, nor apparell, and was chargeable to none, nor took ought against the will of the owner, &c. and with two or three consequences and meanings from your originall, you will make it prove you four or five hundred a yeer, and a great house to live in, and this you will not have by favour but force, and yet they are thieves who denies to give you their goods when you ask it, but now when your practise and Pauls are compared, they are as far distant as before, could you bend his life as you do his words to your own, then might ye deceive the elect, but God hath left this rule for ever, by their fruits shall you know them: so by your works you are so farre from Paul, that you are out-run Balaam and all the false Prophets and greedy dogs you read on in the Scriptures, who never took it by force under pretence of Law, taking three for one, as you do, yet this truth which is as clear as the Sun, must be called railing, because it falls upon your deceit.

(Nayler, *An Answer*, p.33)

SUMMARY

It is quite clear that Quakers oppose the established Church, such as it is at the time, and it is my view that the historical position, the Millenarian current of contemporary thought, and the lack of unified support for any single religious position or form of organisation lends seriousness to their challenge. Quakers attack the remains of the Established Church on many grounds, five of which I now collect together:

- a) Quakers oppose Tithes, which they perceive as a repressive burden on the rural poor. Nayler describes the practice as theft.
- b) Church Worship is attacked in every particular, as being out of the teaching of Christ in 'matter, manner, means and maintainance'. Even Churches as buildings are despised.
- c) Quakers assert the primacy of the Spirit over the Letter, in contrast to the Text-based worship of the Church.
- d) Quakers proclaim the potential to escape sin in this life; Calvinists believe sin to be unavoidable whilst man is in a fallen state, that is, alive on Earth.

- e) Quakers attack the behaviour of Ministers, accusing them of deceit, violence and hypocrisy.

The Quaker view of history is one of eternal recurrence. Conflicts in the present are revealed in this view as being part of the archetypal spiritual struggle between good and evil. Such a view leaves little room for compromise. Nayler himself plainly associates suffering and persecution with Christ's party, an identification which seems uncomfortably prophetic in his own case.

Nayler's style is marked by the use of phonologically or otherwise matched pairs of terms which serve to point up the differences Nayler perceives between Quaker and Church practices and beliefs. Nayler has a strikingly oral view of the debate, framed in 'you say/I say', conversational terms. Symbol and metaphor are notably close to the surface of language for him, vividly alive in the present and capable of being triggered by the merest lexical similarity. Nayler rejects the subtleties of textual interpretation favoured by Baxter, preferring a simple and all-inclusive view of Biblical symbology, which tends to bring all terms within one of two absolute moral categories.

Nayler uses lexical items introduced by Baxter in various ways; there is a sense of Baxter's terms invading Nayler's text, but Nayler turns these terms back on their Master. Nayler even uses the form of Baxter's attack to assert Quaker beliefs in contrast to Baxter's portrayal of them, as in the citation from *An Answer*, page forty-two, where Baxter's accusations form the basis of his account of his faith.

Nayler also employs the same Ideological base or discursive field as Baxter to argue an opposite case. Both writers use the same arguments from Scripture, the same method of validation from Scripture, and the same highly charged and polarised imagery to put forward their positions. Such conflicts may tend to bring into question the basis on which they are fought, since it seems that the same validation can

be used to support either case, a fact which tends to devalue both the terminology and the attitudes it supports.

Nayler's engagement with Baxter is one of a number of such conflicts he enters into with named figures as he pursues a campaign of conversion 'in London, and elsewhere'. This, combined with his identification of Power with the Devil, and godliness with suffering seem to place him in the position of welcoming persecution. The political situation, in which religion and the forms of worship are a central site of contestation, combines with Millenarianism to produce a dangerously inflammable social position. The ferocity of Nayler's rhetoric invites a view of him as a political agitator, which he is not, at least in his own understanding.

Nayler's concerns are religious, he demands the abolition of Tithes and the institutional Church. This is a highly political proposal; or at least politics and religion are not divisible in this period. Quakers are the latest in a succession of sects that challenge orthodoxy, central control, and consensus, and Nayler's increasingly high profile, which can only have been reinforced by his engagement with the energetic Baxter, places him in a dangerous position; a position which he seems to welcome.

CONCLUSION

As indicated in recent work by Achinstein, Raymond, Weber and Freist⁴¹⁸, public opinion became a significant factor during the turmoil of the Civil War. Each side sought public support for their position in the conflict, opening Constitutional, social and religious issues to debate, requiring individuals to make a judgement on which side to support. Religious and political propaganda from every position encouraged discussion in the broader public arena, and the desire for news on the progress of the Civil War increased the demand for printed material. Charles I had been suspicious of the influence of 'Corantos' containing news on foreign affairs, as they encouraged comparison and debate among the population at large. Foreign affairs, Constitutional disputes, ecclesiastical policy, the legal framework and a war between different precedents (such as the Anglo-Saxon heritage beloved of John Lilburne and the 'Divine Right of Kings' promoted by Royalists) are all involved in the ongoing process of contestation which carved out the apparently self-sufficient, even all-encompassing category we call 'Politics'. There was suspicion on all sides of the influence of such propaganda:

the conservatives during the seventeenth century had a specific kind of public to fear, one which could express its wants in a language of its own. This was no gullible mass, but rather an entity which was choosing sides, the object of address of a pamphlet literature in which powerful political ideas were being expressed.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Sharon Achinstein, 'The Politics of Babel in the English Revolution', p.24, (in) *Pamphlet Wars*, (ed.) James Holstun, (1992), pp.14-44. Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1996). Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II 1660-1685*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington: Kentucky, (1996). Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London 1637-1645*, Tauris Academic Studies, London & New York, (1997).

⁴¹⁹ Sharon Achinstein, 'The Politics of Babel', (in) James Holstun (ed.), *Pamphlet Wars*, p.27.

As early as 1641 the Stationers' Company, mindful of its eroding monopoly, complained to Parliament of 'the swarms of scandalous and irksome pamphletts that are cryed about the streets'⁴²⁰. They expressly urged censorship, but the existence of two competing centres of authority, Parliament in London and the King in Oxford (later York), and the developing divisions in Parliamentary support meant that 'the holders of power had to give up their monopoly over the definition of "meaning" to a busy market which prospered from diversity of opinions'⁴²¹. It has become generally accepted that:

After 1641 London's print industry could no longer be simply "silenced", the historical present ignored, banished or disregarded; competing accounts of current political events became a necessary condition for the achievement and maintenance of power.⁴²²

Even the defeated Royalists concluded that public opinion was something to which they needed to appeal, with *Eikon Basilike* standing as the single most successful piece of propaganda by either side, going through thirty-nine editions in a year. Early enthusiasm for the free exchange of opinions began to fade. Radicals such as the Fifth Monarchists and John Milton came to desire the replacement of the oligarchy of Monarchy with an equally oligarchical rule of the Saints⁴²³. Richard Baxter is as explicit in his fear of the mob as any Royalist⁴²⁴. While Baxter may have criticised too rigid an orthodoxy, and Abiezer Coppe deprecated political distinctions and 'forms' in the name of a transcendent unity, any such unity was hard to establish

⁴²⁰ Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion*, pp.56-57.

⁴²¹ Freist, p.75. Joad Raymond places the Newsbook as coeval with Parliament's explicit turn to public opinion in its dispute with the King. 'A public sphere of political opinion was not created on 22 November, but the debate on that day, and on 15 November, involved a symbolic leap in attitudes towards the polity... The development of a radical and political literature through the 1640's was only possible on this foundation.' J. Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, p.122. Incidentally, it was Colonel William Purefoy, governor of Warwick, (who was to be in charge of Coppe's Parliamentary examination), who proposed on the 15th of November that Parliament's *Grand Remonstrance* be printed in a direct Parliamentary appeal to public opinion.

⁴²² Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets*, p.6.

⁴²³ Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*; John Milton, *The Readie and Easie Way*, (London, 1659).

in the highly contentious and polarised field of politico/religious debate inscribed by writers on every side of the argument. While the perception of an increasing public political awareness over the period seems now uncontentious, I would like to take the argument a little further: the public became aware of the disadvantages of political conflict - indeed change - as much as they developed any desire to accomplish a particular set of political or constitutional objectives. There is little doubt that there was a widespread (though not universal) sense of relief at the 'Restoration of the Monarchy', attendant on the anticipation of a return to stability and normality⁴²⁵. The fields of politics and religion start to become distinguishable in a way that they were not to William Walwyn or James Nayler, perhaps prompting Andrew Marvell to his later conclusion that the 'Good Old Cause' was too good to have been fought for⁴²⁶.

Without entering a new field of research, I would suggest that the general tenor of Post-Restoration culture (despite the reactionary programme of the Cavalier Parliament (1661-1678)) indicates a turning away from principle (what we might call ideology) and towards a less morally bound and more conventionally prescribed climate, both in the arts and the emerging sciences⁴²⁷. There is a related shift away from 'inspiration' and towards 'decorum' in reaction to 'enthusiasm'.

People became tired of the ferocious certainties of the conflict, in which God was invoked as supporting every warring viewpoint, and God's judgement deduced from every

⁴²⁴ William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, pp.103, 116, 300.

⁴²⁵ Almost continuous constitutional experiments after the Civil War led many to desire a return to 'known laws' and traditional forms of government. See Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, pp.221-222.

⁴²⁶ *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, (1672), (ed.) D.I.B. Smith, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1971), p.135.

⁴²⁷ See C. Hill, *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison: Wisc., (1980), Ch.XII, pp.82-90; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth-Century England*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, (1978), Ch.22 'The Decline of Magic', pp.767-800, esp. 'New Aspirations', pp.785-794.

passing victory. God's judgement was open to too many conflicting interpretations⁴²⁸. For Freist,

the increasingly incompatible positions - both political and religious - of King and Parliament undermined the very roots of authority... throughout the rest of the century, politics, the church, and the monarchy remained issues of public debate.⁴²⁹

The Licensing Act, which gave the authority to regulate printing to the Church, was passed in 1662, and Roger L'Estrange appointed 'Surveyor of the Press' in an attempt to close off the entrances to great Babel.

The Royalist attacks on the press may be seen as criticisms of the entry of new voices into the political arena, and the likening of the press's activity to Babel was a way of opposing the notion that the people were an audience fit to participate in public debate at all.⁴³⁰

Hobbes, a committed opponent of public involvement in politics, declared 'Faction arises out of private opinions expressed in public'⁴³¹.

The writings I have studied above are clearly part of the process of establishing public opinion as a powerful political force, and thus the discourse of Politics. Attitudes to these writings have varied over time; even their champions have regarded them with a degree of suspicion. For William Haller, in his commentary for *Tracts on Liberty*,

The truth was that these manifestations of spiritual turmoil in the lower classes sprang in part from genuine religious feeling, from naïve mysticism, from semiliterate yearning for poetic expression. Partly they were ill-directed, sometimes knavish, attempts to escape from the harness of customary morality. Partly they were

⁴²⁸ See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Ch.4 'Providence', pp.90-132, esp. p.127, and Ch.5, 'Prayer and Prophecy', pp.133-178, esp. p.172.

⁴²⁹ Freist, p.305.

⁴³⁰ Achinstein, 'The Politics of Babel', p.24.

⁴³¹ in Achinstein, 'The Politics of Babel', p.35.

the clumsy but honest gestures of the vulgar
after freedom and social justice.⁴³²

This seems strangely condescending, coming from a sympathetic commentator, but nearly seventy years have passed since Haller wrote his assessment. I think that we can dismiss the notion of a 'semiliterate yearning for poetic expression', and how one would distinguish a particular form of mysticism as being 'naïve' I cannot say. However, Haller's conclusion that every interest 'could find theologians to square it with the will of God. The inevitable result was to discredit all theologies and creeds in the minds of intelligent people.' (p.69) seems sound in general terms, although I doubt whether such a change of perspective occurred as smoothly as he might imply.

The question of religion has another significance. A lively debate over the extent of religious belief among Levellers, Diggers, and Ranters continues, particularly with reference to Gerrard Winstanley and William Walwyn. In many respects I think the debate over the primacy of religion or politics in Walwyn's world-view is misplaced⁴³³. It attempts to draw a distinction Walwyn would surely have found reprehensibly Machiavellian. Religion was a broader category in the 1640's than it is now, and contained more of the world. Indeed, if taken seriously, as many undoubtedly did, religion contained all of the world, and a great deal more besides. The question is whether one believes Walwyn or his detractors. It seems to me that any particular individual is likely to find within a given tradition that which appeals to their individual viewpoint; thus Walwyn can find support for tolerance, natural rights and practical charity in Christianity, just as commentators can find support in

⁴³² William Haller, *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1647, Vol.1, Commentary*, Columbia University Press, New York, (1934), p.36.

⁴³³ Lotte Mulligan, writing in Greaves and Zaller, remarks 'Most writers - with the notable exception of Schenk - present Walwyn as a rationalist who 'lived by reason alone' (Pease, p.247). Yet his autobiographical sketch (*A Whisper in the Eare*) made it clear that the humanist authors he read were unable to resolve his problems of conscience... A Protestant's faith, not a humanist's reason, was the source of his inner peace.' *A Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals, Vol.III*, pp.287-289.

Walwyn's own writings for their view that he is a sceptic or a rationalist.

This question is related to current interest among scholars in atheism, something Walwyn was accused of by his opponents in *Walwins Wiles*. 'Atheism' could mean many things in the seventeenth century, and perhaps the least likely of these is a complete disbelief in God⁴³⁴. One could be termed an atheist for disobeying God's Laws, for example, or for rejecting a particular form of religious observance. 'Atheist' is more a term of abuse than a description, the frame of reference, the discourse, within which political and cultural debates were carried out was largely religious, and Walwyn is unusual in not larding his text with Biblical references, a fact which in itself may have prompted some to accuse him of atheism.

Even if people did not believe in God, it would have been almost impossible to say it; still less possible to print it. Laurence Clarkson's reductive assaults on Biblical metaphor come as close as possible to atheism from within this theological discourse⁴³⁵. Gerrard Winstanley tries to use the discourse in a new way, displacing the vocabulary in order to achieve a new view, for example by equating God and reason⁴³⁶. Clarkson and Winstanley disagreed sharply. It may have been Winstanley's support for a conventional morality (or perhaps family structure and property rights) which prompted Clarkson to describe him as a 'right tithe-gatherer for propriety' in *A Lost Sheep Found*. In the outcome, Clarkson took an almost Hobbesian route, settling for any authority rather than rely on debate to disclose the truth - as Walwyn and Milton had earlier advised - choosing to align himself with the authoritative Third Dispensation as promoted by Reeve and Muggleton⁴³⁷.

⁴³⁴ However, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, esp.

'Scepticism' pp.198-206 for examples of Elizabethan and later disbelief.

⁴³⁵ *A Single Eye, All Light*, (in) *C.R.W.*, pp.161-175.

⁴³⁶ Although 'reason' is an acceptable translation of the Greek 'logos', Naylor and many others decry 'natural' or 'earthly' reason as a barrier to true understanding of the 'spirit' of religious discourse.

⁴³⁷ Christopher Hill, Barry Reay & William Lamont, *The World of the Muggletonians*, Temple Smith, London, (1983). John Milton, *Areopagitica*, 347

As for the question of 'Discourse' in its broadest sense, if the tendency of Foucault's analysis to erase human agency from history is to be redressed, some demonstration of manoeuvrability within the all-encompassing net of discourse is required. The debates in which these writings engage are dominated by the discourse of theology, the language of the Bible and of preaching. The texts challenge the integrity of this discourse through its own inherent fractures, in the contrasts of (for example) Law and Grace, Old Testament and New, history and prophecy, chronicle and allegory, which are vastly exacerbated by internalised, spiritualist Biblical interpretation. Abiezer Coppe draws together utterly contradictory descriptions of God even in his 'retraction' *Copp's Return*. James Nayler defends the use of Biblical invective in his dispute with Baxter, who clearly feels that his own language has been appropriated, much as his church has been invaded. The inherent heterogeneity of the Bible allows such manoeuvrability.

Not only does the discourse of theology suffer through its own internal divisions, contradictions being brought to the fore by the ferocious polarisation of religious debate; but it is also subject to a range of interpretative practices so broad, and in the case of the Quakers, so internalised, that almost anything seems permissible. Laurence Clarkson's reductive analysis of the key Seeker and Quaker term 'light' is one example⁴³⁸; James Nayler's use of Biblical imagery as a psychological route-map is another, each working in the opposite direction.

There are other discourses in play too. Both Walwyn and Coppe make use of medical metaphors⁴³⁹, and each has access to the different tradition of pre-Christian Rome and Greece, Walwyn in translation, and Coppe through his classical

(1644), (in) *Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol. II, 1643-1648*, (ed.) Ernest Sirluck, Oxford University Press, London, (1959), pp.485-570. William Walwyn, *The Compassionate Samaritane*, (1644) (in) Taft, *The Writings of William Walwyn*, pp.97-124.

⁴³⁸ Lamont, Hill, Reay, *The World of the Muggletonians*.

⁴³⁹ As discussed by John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution*, and Cheryl Thrash, 'The Polemical Body in Seventeenth-Century Toleration Tracts'.

education. Nayler's frame of reference is markedly rural, although even this is brought into relation with its Biblical counterpart, partly through the King James' Version's incipient English pastoralism. Walwyn is the least constrained by religious discourse notably free of the Biblical phrases and references which dominate the writings of Coppe and the Quakers. He makes astute and, one presumes, deliberate use of different discursive fields in each work, thus suggesting himself as a pioneer of what the Eighteenth century knew as 'decorum'. *Some Considerations* is predominately practical in tone and content, and Walwyn employs what might be called homely expressions, bluff and practical, close to the 'plain style' which evolved in English prose over the succeeding generation, or the 'Puritan' style proposed by Joan Webber. *Power of Love*, on the other hand, is spiritual and elevated in content and lexicon, and is primarily a theological work. These differences in tone show Walwyn to have an appreciation of what language is suitable to a given subject, and to have developed early an awareness of the discursive requirements of different audiences. Nayler's case is the most complex and extreme; although the purposes to which he turns religious discourse are highly individual he seems entirely self-identified with it, certainly unwilling, and perhaps unable, to speak of his own feelings in his own words⁴⁴⁰. His elliptical phrasing and depersonalised tone lead to tortuous complexities in the confessional sections of *To the Life of God in All* in particular, where the narrative of Nayler's 'fall' is overwhelmed by repeated irruptions of the living Christ. His commitment to the discourse is complete; he interprets everything through it. Despite its domination, he uses it as both weapon and justification in a wholesale assault on the institution dedicated to its preservation.

In my view, these texts demonstrate a range of individual approaches to be possible within even such an authoritative discourse as Theology. A sort of contestation between discourses is visible in Walwyn and Coppe, Walwyn discussing

⁴⁴⁰ See his description of his relationship with Martha Simmonds in *To the*

religion in rationalist, or perhaps Socratic style, Coppe being rebuked by John Tickell for his inappropriate use of Juvenal. Contestation within the discourse is marked throughout: Walwyn's condemnation of 'Morall' Christians, Coppe's repudiation of 'Cassocks' and 'the lash', Nayler's part in the 'Lamb's War' on the remaining structures of the Established Church.

All three castigate the educated, who seek to maintain historical domination over this discourse, controlling interpretation through their access to specialist knowledge⁴⁴¹. This period, then, offers a concrete historical demonstration of human agency within a specific discourse, showing how the tools provided by a discourse can be put to different uses. Walwyn explicitly attacks the latinate pomposity of University/Clerical prose. Coppe deploys his knowledge of ancient languages both to bolster his own authority and in a parodic commentary on dry scholasticism. Nayler's Biblically-inflected style is by no means 'plain', but arises from a social and intellectual position far removed from, and diametrically opposed to, the high 'Anglican' style inculcated in both the Laudian and - to a large extent - the Presbyterian clergy. Coppe's status as a renegade from the ranks of 'University men, - Long-gowns, Cloakes, or Cassocks, O Strange'⁴⁴² may have led to a particular interest in him by the authorities, who feared defections from their own ranks to the lawless mob.

Reading backwards, as it were, the religious/political disputations of this period can be seen in the light of later developments, and particularly the novelistic satire of Swift⁴⁴³. Defoe, Swift and Pope were all active in the disputational literature of their own period⁴⁴⁴. The inherent dialogism of such literature prefigures the dialogism of the novel as much as the spiritual autobiography contributes to

Life of God in All, (1649), in the biographical note above, pp.201-202.

⁴⁴¹ See 'Nayler versus Baxter' above, pp.284-341.

⁴⁴² Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips*, (in) *C.R.W.*, p.60.

⁴⁴³ This comparison is drawn at length in Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*.

⁴⁴⁴ See Richard Irvine Cook, *Jonathan Swift as a Tory Pamphleteer*, Washington University Press, Seattle; London, (1967).

the development of an individual narratorial voice. Most important among the influences of this literature is the huge and permanent expansion of the market for printed news and comment which the sheer volume of pamphlets, licensed or unlicensed, implies. It was never possible to entirely silence the expression of heterodox views, despite the efforts of Roger L'Estrange and his successors⁴⁴⁵.

A close reading of these three writers reveals something about each which more general and synoptic reviews have elided. It also suggests a trajectory of radical thought running contrary to the general flow of a history seen in terms of revolutions or progress.

William Walwyn's writing reveals the familiar picture of a rational discursive mode, influenced by Montaigne, and looking forward to the 'enlightenment'. However, Walwyn is no rationalist; he is as determined a believer in revealed religion as either Coppe or Nayler. Walwyn's repeated stress on the free exchange of views does not mean that he is willing or able to change his own convictions; a man believes what he cannot but believe.

Abiezer Coppe is one of the most exciting writers of the seventeenth century, full of urgency and passion, righteous indignation, humour, fire, and naked sincerity, an extraordinary writer by any measure. Within the tradition to which he declares his loyalty, that of the Prophetic religious writers and Fathers of the Church, he either associates himself with or frequently incorporates writings ascribed to David, Solomon, Isaiah, Habukkuk, John of Patmos, Paul of Tarsus, Christ, and even God himself. Coppe's range of expressive strategies has led to confusion among commentators: Corns describes a 'ludic and simultaneously aggressive idiom', but such extremes are characteristic of highly charged satirical writing such as Coppe's. Nashe and Swift's extremes are no less, although both come from the other side of a profound religious and

⁴⁴⁵ Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II 1660-*

philosophical divide. Coppe's stance and style, extraordinary as they are, are not without their precedents. The Biblical models, such as the Song of Solomon and Isaiah, are clearly visible. McDowell proposes that Coppe's style develops in a parodic relationship with the heresiographers, but his identification of Lily's Grammar as the specific text parodied in *Some Sweet Sips*, Epistle III, Chapter II is more persuasive. Coppe's writings most resemble those of his contemporaries Joseph Salmon, George Foster, Isaac Penington, John Saltmarsh and William Erbury, in varying ways and degrees, all these writers having recourse to a spiritualist, 'seeker' vocabulary derived from the Bible. Bakhtin's 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel' suggests a wider connection of viewpoint with Langland and Dante. Coppe's moral and religious satire is in the tradition of Hugh Latimer, even King Lear, when madness allowed him the insight of the 'Holy Fool'. This is a cultural type, not merely an aberration. Coppe's abrupt shifts of tone, his vivid energy, his impatience are reminiscent of Nashe. Just as I cannot demonstrate that Coppe had either heard Shakespeare or read Nashe, I am not about to assert that Coppe had any direct influence on the Romantic movement in general, or Blake in particular, but evidence of Blake's interest in revealed religion, in Biblical re-interpretation and in the exploration of moral restraints is not hard to find⁴⁴⁶. E.P. Thompson suggests that Blake was in contact with Muggletonian influences⁴⁴⁷. Direct influence by Coppe on later writers seems fairly unlikely: few copies of his writings survive, and they were not reprinted (unlike, for example, those of Joseph Salmon

1685, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington: Kentucky, (1996).

⁴⁴⁶ William Blake, *Blake's Poems and Prophecies*, (ed.) Max Plowman, Dent, London, (1972); *The Book of Urizen*, (eds) Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, Thames & Hudson, London, (1979); *The Four Zoas by William Blake: A Photographic facsimile of the Manuscript*, (eds) Cettina Tramotano Magno & David V. Erdman, Associated University Press, (1987); *The Complete Poems*; (ed.) W.H. Stevenson, Longman, London, (1989); *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, (facsimile reprint) Dover, New York, (1994). S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, Thames & Hudson, London, (1973); Jon Mee, *Dangerous enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790's*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1992); A.D. Nuttall, *The Alternative Trinity: Gnostic heresy in Marlowe, Milton and Blake*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (1998); Leslie Tannenbaum, *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, (1982).

or James Nayler), but someone thought it worth printing *A Character of a True Christian* as late as 1680 - there are two editions of this song, sung to the tune of 'The Fair Nymphs', printed as a 'broadsheet', on a single sheet⁴⁴⁸. Among later writings, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Alan Ginsberg's *Howl* have affinities with Coppe's writing.

This period has been consistently mined for the point of origin of any number of social trends, intellectual developments and political positions. If we are driven to seek points of origin located in inscriptions in the sea of textuality, then Coppe's fervent prose, his rumoured hedonism and his claims for inspiration place him as a possible model, origin or exemplar for the Romantic movement. The radicalism and claims to inspiration of the early romantics is suggestive of the spectre of wild-eyed antinomian enthusiasm so dreadful to the 'Augustan Age'. Nayler and Coppe are also, possibly, a point of closure, among the last flowerings of a Neo-Platonic Humanism previously represented by Dr. John Dee in the Elizabethan period, and the fashionable Masque of the Jacobean and Caroline Courts, (in which, despite the enormous gulf that separates the Masque from Nayler socially and culturally, there is a similar wish to credit human beings with divine authority).

If we take Coppe within his context of both belief and history, his adoption of a Divine or prophetic voice allies comfortably with his belief in direct access to God and his concern for social justice. His personal history, as a provincial student who rejected the dry scholasticism of University study in favour of direct revelation, both enables and explains his sudden switches between clerical/academic, prophetic and colloquial registers. Coppe expresses what he feels is unmediated ('immediate') revelation, (and therefore incontrovertible truth). Part of his energy - scarcely confinable within his text - derives

⁴⁴⁷ E.P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (1993).

from a feeling of release not only from the Academy but also from the grim polarities of Calvinist theology. Coppe's retractions, despite Corns' description of them as 'full', maintain a robust ironical assault on hypocrisy and greed, although now within a strict regime of sinfulness. This 'Post-Ranter' theology of 'filiation' and 'omnipresencie' is closer still to Quaker belief. Walwyn's *The Vanitie of the Present Churches* (1648-9)⁴⁴⁹ sharply criticises those who exceed the authority of the Scriptures in favour of direct revelation. Coppe, apparently a Joachite, differs not least from Walwyn in believing that a new dispensation of direct revelation is to abrogate the authority of the Gospels, a state 'which, in a large measure, some are already entered into.'⁴⁵⁰

James Nayler and the other Quakers also seem to follow Joachite precedent in believing in a new dispensation, and similarly seem to feel themselves as inaugurating the new era. Nayler's social concern is clear, and he shows considerable skill in detailed theological argument in his exchanges with particular named 'Parish Teachers'. What is most disconcerting about Nayler's writing is his determinedly impersonal attitude, ascribing all actions to the continual struggle of supra-personal spirits. Nayler's style is clearly less 'modern' than Walwyn's, sometimes resembling a patchwork of Biblical citation, sometimes impossibly elliptical. Nayler's epic sentences connect all areas of his thought in chains of clauses, sweeping from subject to subject, insistently relating all aspects of life to Biblical precedent and transcendent reality. Quaker theology is judiciously imprecise over matters of predestination, but Nayler shows a further Joachite - and Calvinist - trait in his adoption of the doctrine of the 'two seeds', which he also figures as 'generations'. Nayler extends the theory of 'types' (to which Joachim of Flores contributed) to the world at large, using the Bible as a way of interpreting both psychology and contemporary events.

⁴⁴⁸ Thomas Newcombe printed one of them. Strangely enough, the Wing Short Title Catalogue describes one edition as a 'satire'.

⁴⁴⁹ pp.308-333 in Taft.

This further extension of typical analysis from text to world does not seem to denote a Coppeian supercession of the Bible, but rather an insistence on the relevance and contemporaneity of Biblical models. It sometimes seems that Nayler is unable to see the world for the Biblical template he applies to it. He is a powerful and persuasive writer, capable of compassion, scorn, mysticism, detailed, logical and consistent argument and Biblical exegesis. He has an all-embracing symbolic view, which his oral, hortatory style carries the reader forward into. I feel there is good reason to question the impression given by Hill, Damrosch and Bittle that Nayler somehow ceased to be active in the Quaker mission after his imprisonment. He continued to publish, engaging both anti-Quaker propagandists and those in possession of political and religious authority, and it is impossible to know how his career might have developed but for his death.

Whereas Coppe sees some possibility of transcending the cultural boundaries set by the Bible in a new dispensation, Nayler sees everything in terms of Biblical archetypes, an eternal recurrence, a cyclical struggle between the impersonal spirits of good and evil. In these few years we can see history flow as it were backwards; it begins with a democratic, even 'progressive' constitutional programme expressed in 'rational' terms, and end with a recycling of archaic Biblical symbols and language in an eternalised historical present. Such a narrative is a construct imposed on historical contingencies, however, and a different choice of writers, or even of texts, might result in a different reading. Certainly the picture of a retreat from an emerging 'rationalism' would not have been obvious, or even acceptable, to the writers concerned.

It is still true, however, as can be seen from recent events in Uganda⁴⁵¹ that times of crisis and uncertainty, of

⁴⁵⁰ Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips*, Epistle V, (in) *C.R.W.*, p.72.

⁴⁵¹ The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, which under the pressures of war practised group self-immolation by fire, dying in their burning churches, although I cannot say whether this was a voluntary act by the membership, or imposed by the leadership.

thwarted aspirations and political powerlessness may result in fundamentalist and millenarian reaction. To conclude, as Catherine Belsey appears to in *The Subject of Tragedy*⁴⁵², that such expression is 'psychotic' is only to continue after the fact, and through an anachronistic diagnosis, a tradition of ostracism and repression.

My study has been dedicated to making these texts, and texts of this sort, more accessible. This is only one step in what I hope is a continuing process of coming to terms with the upheavals of three hundred and fifty years ago. Reading these texts has involved many adjustments, particularly in terms of vocabulary, punctuation and perspective. Perhaps the subtlest and hardest to explain has been the realisation that expressions drawn from or based on Biblical sources had a more than metaphorical significance for Coppe and the Quakers, they had practical application, and psychological reality. For Nayler, the Serpent is no figure of speech, it is a state of being whose effect he sees in the world around him. To follow Christ with sufficient dedication may be to become Christ. Much of this is strange and disconcerting. What I find heartening in these texts is their consistent faith in human potentiality, which operates in contradiction to the assertions of universal sinfulness and predestinate reprobation which characterise Calvinism. These writers doggedly refuse the crushing burden of Calvinist doubt as well as its apparent alternative, the Patriarchal authoritarianism of apologists for the Monarchy.

⁴⁵² Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, (1985), p.5.

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