

**University of Alberta**

**Godliness With a Difference: Religious Arguments for Toleration in Mid-  
Seventeenth-Century England**

by

**Jeremy Aaron Nathan Fradkin**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts**

in

**History**

**Department of History and Classics**

©Jeremy Fradkin

Spring 2012

Edmonton, Alberta

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Libraries to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only. Where the thesis is converted to, or otherwise made available in digital form, the University of Alberta will advise potential users of the thesis of these terms.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis and, except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatsoever without the author's prior written permission.



Library and Archives  
Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-87875-0*

*Our file Notre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-87875-0*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores some of the religious arguments for toleration in Civil War and Interregnum England. The object of study is not 'toleration' as a singular ideal, but rather a selection of proposed 'tolerations' from this period. The thesis argues that these proposals advocated toleration as something beneficial to the true Christian religion. The first chapter explores the role of sceptical arguments in establishing a probabilistic Protestant epistemology which underpinned proposals for toleration in the 1640s. The second chapter examines the 'conscientious' religious methodology that certain tolerationists envisioned when they advocated a Christian religion grounded in Scripture, 'Reason,' industry and sound moral character. The third chapter suggests that 'philo-semitic' English millenarians believed that Jewish difference would be renewed, rather than erased, by Christ in the millennial kingdom. Together, these chapters suggest that certain kinds of religious difference were deemed 'tolerable' because that difference itself was seen as a godly one.

## Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to many individuals at the University of Alberta for allowing me to pursue this project. First among these, Professor Andrew Gow deserves to be singled out for his personal and academic guidance, frequently reminding me of the bigger picture and initiating me into the discipline of history in general. Our often lengthy conversations were an invaluable part of my experience as a graduate student. I am also grateful to several other faculty members within the Department of History and Classics, especially Professor Beverly Lemire and Dr. Jeremy Caradonna, both of whom provided me with whole new insights and questions about early modern Europe. Outside the department, I must thank Dr. Sylvia Brown (English and Film Studies), whose graduate seminar had a profound effect on parts of this thesis. I must also thank the History and Classics administrative staff for their assistance with a variety of technical and administrative concerns. Finally, my experience at the University of Alberta was greatly enhanced by my friendships with my fellow graduate students in History and Classics. There are too many to name here, but I am deeply thankful to each of them for their frequent conversation and support, both personal and academic.

This project has taken shape in Edmonton but retains several roots in Ottawa. My approach to intellectual history and to academic writing in general remains profoundly influenced by my experience as an undergraduate in the College of the Humanities at Carleton University, and I am still grateful to Professor David Dean for inspiring and encouraging my interest in early modern England. On a more personal level, I must acknowledge an immeasurable debt to my mother, Barbara Fradkin, one of the strongest and most inspiring people I know, for her consistent support in all things. Finally, I need to mention Laura Thompson, who has been unwavering in her support despite being made to endure not only two years of long distance, but also my incessant lectures about Christianity, Judaism and early modern England which have filled too many of the all-too-short moments we have had together since I moved to Edmonton for this project.

Lastly, I must also acknowledge the generous financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) through the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship, which allowed me to focus more closely on researching and writing this project.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Sceptical Arguments and the Case for Toleration .....	13
Chapter 2: Labourers after Truth: The Process of Faith and the ‘Conscientious Man’ .....	30
An Industrious Biblicism.....	32
Scripture and Reason.....	34
Honest Error and Hypocrisy.....	44
‘Implicit Faith’ and the ‘Conscientious Man’ .....	48
Distinguishing the Tolerable from the Intolerable.....	51
Separatist Toleration: Roger Williams.....	56
Godly Unity through Godly Liberty.....	59
Chapter 3: Restoration and Reconciliation in the Judeo-Christian Millennium...	62
‘Restorationist’ Millenarianism in England before 1649.....	64
<i>Jewes in America</i> and Providential History.....	71
The Millennial Reconciliation of Jews and Christians.....	75
Millenarians and Jewish Readmission .....	77
Non-millenarian Proposals for Jewish Toleration.....	82
Searching for the ‘Christian Jew’ .....	85
Otherness and Godliness, Unity and Exceptionalism.....	87
Conclusion.....	94
Bibliography.....	108

## Introduction

John Locke, in the very first sentence of his now famous *Letter Concerning Toleration*, asserted that toleration was, in fact, “the chief Characteristical Mark of the True Church.”<sup>1</sup> Locke’s influence on later liberal political theory has pushed this claim regarding the centrality of toleration to the “True Church,” rather than to the commonwealth, into the background. Yet the debate on toleration to which Locke was contributing was, first and foremost, the latest in a long series of public disagreements about the proper doctrine, structure, and jurisdiction of the Church of England. How many divergent opinions and practices among the stubborn English dissenters could be encompassed by an inclusive national church? Under what conditions someone could be a subject of the English state without being a member of her Church? The *Letter*, Locke’s most famous argument for toleration, follows in the tradition of other seventeenth-century English writers by insisting that a certain form of religious toleration is not only beneficial to the state, but will also benefit the truest form of the Christian religion.

As Blair Worden has noted, the historical study of toleration is at heart “a Victorian subject, a monument to Victorian liberalism.”<sup>2</sup> British historians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often described the ‘rise’ of toleration in the early modern period. This field was dominated by intellectual historians who typically conceived of religious toleration as a single idea, a monolithic and organic entity which was seeded in Renaissance humanism and Protestant individualism, began to sprout in the middle of the seventeenth century, and blossomed into a centerpiece of post-Enlightenment liberalism. A special place in this story has usually been reserved not only for Locke, but also for the religious controversies of seventeenth-century England, and especially to the tumultuous Civil War and Interregnum decades. W. K. Jordan concluded his immense *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (4 volumes, 1932-40) with the

---

<sup>1</sup> John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (London, 1689), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Blair Worden, “Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate,” in *Persecution and Toleration, Studies in Church History 21*, edited by W. J. Sheils (Oxford, 1984), 199.

Restoration of Charles II, declaring that religious toleration had been embraced, or at least accepted as necessary, by the majority of English people by 1660.<sup>3</sup>

Despite some variations<sup>4</sup>, this idealist and ‘Whiggish’ approach in English historiography generally persisted until the rise of revisionist histories in the last thirty years or so. In one of his final essays, Herbert Butterfield (1977) repudiated the notion that toleration should be regarded historically as an ideal or value, and suggested that it was usually little more than a “last resort” for people who hated one another but were no longer able to go on fighting. Toleration “was hardly even an ‘idea’ for the most part – just a happening.”<sup>5</sup> Recent years have seen an increase in historical studies of pluralism, tolerance and intolerance in the medieval and early modern periods. Social historians of Britain and continental Europe have drawn attention to the complex interplay between conflict and coexistence within confessionally diverse communities. As one scholar of seventeenth-century France has suggested, social relations are “not fundamentally harmonious, conflictive, consensual or repressive, but all of these.”<sup>6</sup> At the same time, a number of studies have emphasized the limits of seventeenth-century toleration proposals. Blair Worden’s important 1984 essay on the Cromwellian Protectorate warns that our own notion of the meaning of the word ‘toleration’ might hinder our ability to understand its use in the early modern context. “The goal of liberty of conscience,” Worden argues, “was very different from modern liberalism. It was a religious union, which persecution was held to have destroyed: the union of the believer with Christ, and the union of believers with

---

<sup>3</sup> W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, IV, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Joseph Lecler’s *Toleration and the Reformation*, 2 vols (London, 1960) and Henry Kamen’s *The Rise of Toleration* (New York, 1967). Lecler’s book inverts ‘Whig’ historiography by highlighting examples of Catholic tolerance and Protestant intolerance, and draws much less optimistic conclusions about the extent of early modern toleration. Kamen’s book diminishes the importance of the Reformation and acknowledges that the story of toleration has not followed a linear path. Yet both of these largely maintain an understanding of toleration as an singular liberal ideal.

<sup>5</sup> H. Butterfield, “Toleration in Early Modern Times,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38.4 (1977), 383.

<sup>6</sup> G. Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine* (Philadelphia, 1993), 12. For English examples, see the essays by C. Marsh, B. Stevenson and Derek Plumb in *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725*, edited by Margaret Spufford (Cambridge, 1995).

each other. The former was essential to salvation: the latter was essential to the creation of a commonwealth fit for God's eyes."<sup>7</sup>

The essays in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (1991) attempt to situate the 1689 Act of Toleration within its specific historical context, largely leaving out the question of teleology. This would be followed in 1996 by a second volume of essays on *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (1996). These essays, many of them from leading continental scholars, have encouraged English historians to place events in a greater European context. Generally speaking, most of these essays emphasize the pervasive intolerance of the Reformation period, the difference between early modern toleration and modern liberal notions of tolerance, the persistence of the desire for religious unity in early modern European states, and the marginal social and intellectual position of the few radicals who advocated any kind of universal toleration or claimed that religious diversity might actually be positive in itself. 'Toleration' as such is presented not as a triumphant proto-liberal idea but as something closer to Butterfield's view: a politically expedient decision to refrain from persecution.

John Coffey's study on *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (2000) suggests that it is time for a 'post-revisionist' approach to early modern toleration. Against the revisionists, he argues:

It is no doubt true that the study of the period introduces us to a world very different from our own ... Yet it would be a mistake to draw too bold a contrast between a devout past and an irreligious modernity, or to tie modernisation too closely to secularisation. This is a mistake made by both Whigs and revisionists. Working on the assumption that to be modern is to be secular, W. K. Jordan described a seventeenth century populated by rationalists, whilst revisionists have rediscovered the power of religion in the period and concluded that it is pre-modern. Yet the fact that early modern tolerationists, for instance, thought in profoundly theological terms does not make them distant and irrelevant ... Ironically, in claiming to repudiate strongly teleological narratives, revisionists have often uncritically accepted one of the grandest teleological stories of all, the secularisation thesis, which in its classic Marxist and Weberian

---

<sup>7</sup> Worden, "Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate," 210.



versions suggests that modernisation leads inevitably to the decline of religion.<sup>8</sup>

Coffey's view agrees with that of John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (1998) who also reject the instinctive connection between toleration and secularization. "Some of the most insistent voices," they add, "have always demanded toleration as a matter of religion."<sup>9</sup> This suggestion that we can view early modern tolerationists as deeply religious, even theological thinkers, not secular ones, and yet still think of them as somehow intellectually connected to secular 'moderns' like us in certain ways, has the potential to be very liberating for the self-conscious historian of early modern England who cannot escape the spectre of Whiggish, Marxist and Weberian narratives. Coffey's study presents a revised version of the Whiggish story; it is, by and large, an intellectual history which cautiously describes a movement in the seventeenth century from persecution to toleration. Coffey stresses continuity to the present without dressing up early modern tolerationists as modern liberals.

Alexandra Walsham's *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (2006) provides a indispensable revisionist counterpoint to Coffey's work. Walsham surveys the social history of interconfessional conflict and coexistence which Coffey largely ignores. Her approach is thematic rather than chronological; she attempts to demonstrate the persistence of belief in the value of religious coercion beyond 1689, and to illustrate the measures of tolerance which were present within the English Church before formal arguments for toleration became common. Most importantly, she suggests that we need to stop thinking about tolerance and intolerance as fundamental opposites. "The idea that one waxed as the other waned," she writes, "seriously hampers our understanding of the religious culture of early modern England." On the contrary, she argues, drawing on studies of religious pluralism in both medieval and early modern Europe, that "tolerance and intolerance are better seen as dialectically and

---

<sup>8</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow, 2000), 8.

<sup>9</sup> John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (eds.). *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 1998), 5. Blair Worden also emphasizes the

symbiotically linked.”<sup>10</sup> Both tolerance and intolerance of religious dissent, she argues, were seen as acts of Christian charity; both were a ‘charitable hatred.’

My thesis is an intellectual history of some of the religious arguments for religious toleration in Civil War and Interregnum England. For this reason, the complex social dynamics of early modern religious pluralism will be largely neglected. But I have neither the space nor the intention to tell a story about how some singular ideal of toleration came to ‘triumph’ in the West. As Laursen and Nederman have observed, “toleration of multiple viewpoints is justified from multiple viewpoints.”<sup>11</sup> Mine is a study not of toleration, but of proposed *tolerations*. To put it more precisely, I want to know what allowed certain kinds of religious difference to appear ‘tolerable’ from a theological point of view. Proponents of religious toleration were not simply exceptional proto-liberal figures whose uncanny clairvoyance allowed them to recognize, before their contemporaries, the inherent value of ‘toleration’ as an ideal. I will be taking seriously Walsham’s suggestion that the relationship between tolerance and intolerance should be seen as ‘as dialectically and symbiotically linked,’ as well as Coffey’s observation that “every society has a theory of toleration; societies simply differ over what is tolerable.”<sup>12</sup> Many tolerationist writers found, in their understanding of what ought to constitute true Christian religion, an argument for re-drawing the boundary between the tolerable and the intolerable. “Tolerance,” as Philip Benedict has written, “is not a polymorphously perverse attribute, capable of extension in any direction, possessed by certain individuals or societies and lacked by others.”<sup>13</sup> There is no perfect Platonic form of tolerance. People identify reasons to tolerate certain kinds of difference, and they find reasons not to tolerate other kinds of difference.

---

deeply theological nature of the seventeenth-century debate on toleration. See Worden, “Toleration and the Comrwellian Protectorate,” 201.

<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Laursen and Nederman (eds.), *Beyond the Persecuting Society*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Benedict. “*Un roi, une loi, deux fois*: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555-1685,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (Cambridge, 1996), 65.

When searching for a consistent intellectual foundation for tolerationist arguments in seventeenth-century England, a quick review of the literature should warn the historian against viewing any particular religious theology or group as necessarily inclined to some kind of essential ‘toleration.’ Many ideas that have, at one point or another, hitherto been associated with ‘tolerance,’ could be and were used to produce what we might consider decisively ‘intolerant’ arguments. One of the most well-known examples of this from the early modern period is sceptical philosophy. The relationship between early modern scepticism and toleration has been the subject of a number of studies, which have produced a mixed assessment at best.<sup>14</sup> The first chapter of this thesis will examine the use of sceptical arguments in English proposals for religious toleration in the 1640s.

Another well-known example of a ideological ground for ‘tolerance’ is the concept of *adiaphora*, the notion that some doctrines and practices were ‘things indifferent’ to salvation. Some ecumenical tolerationists in the sixteenth century, especially Sebastian Castellio and Jacobus Acontius, suggested the distinction between ‘fundamentals’ and ‘things indifferent’ as a basis for concord in the church, hoping to counteract the increasing divisions of the Reformation period. This scheme would essentially allow Christians to ‘agree to disagree’ on indifferent things because salvation was not at stake. The *adiaphora* argument was taken up again by several seventeenth-century tolerationists and ecumenists.<sup>15</sup> Yet the concept of *adiaphora* was a double-edged sword. The Elizabethan theologian Richard Hooker, along with the later Anglican latitudinarians who cited him as an influence, also used the concept of *adiaphora* to argue for enforced conformity. Hooker argued that if certain doctrines or practices were

---

<sup>14</sup> Richard Tuck, “Scepticism and Toleration in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, edited by Susan Mendus (Cambridge, 1988), 21-36; R. H. Popkin, “Skepticism about Religion and Millenarian Dogmatism: Two Sources of Toleration in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Beyond the Persecuting Society*, 232-250; Alan Levine (ed.), *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration* (Lanham, 1999); John Coffey, “Scepticism, Dogmatism and Toleration in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Persecution and pluralism: Calvinists and religious minorities in early modern Europe, 1550-1700*, edited by Richard Bonney and D.J.B. Trim (Bern, 2006), 149-176.

<sup>15</sup> P. G. Bietenholz, *Encounters with a Radical Erasmus: Erasmus' work as a source of radical thought in early modern Europe* (Toronto, 2009), 108; John C. Higgins-Biddle, introduction to *The Reasonableness of Christianity* by John Locke (Oxford, 1999), lxiv-lxvii.

‘things indifferent’ to salvation, then Christian dissenters could and should dutifully submit to the traditions of the national church without any risk to their own souls.<sup>16</sup>

Some historians have been tempted to think of the Independent gathered churches of the Civil War period as generally inclined to toleration, in contrast to the Presbyterians, because of their consistent pleas in the 1640s for liberty of conscience.<sup>17</sup> Yet this perspective has been persuasively refuted by Avihu Zakai, who has shown that most of the Civil War Independents were not interested in widespread toleration, but rather were hoping to save the crumbling godly alliance with the Presbyterians that had been so effective in the early days of the Civil War.<sup>18</sup> For most of the Independent divines of the 1640s, ‘liberty of conscience’ would still only extend to a relatively narrow array of beliefs and practices.

Arminian theology was a common thread for a number of English tolerationists, including both high churchmen like William Chillingworth and Jeremy Taylor and nonconformists like John Goodwin and possibly John Milton. This diverse group of thinkers was united largely by the rejection of high Calvinist double predestination theology. The English tolerationist Arminians have been compared to the Dutch Remonstrants like Simon Episcopius, Hugo Grotius, and, later, Philip van Limborch.<sup>19</sup> Dissenters, however, hardly thought of the ‘Arminian’ church of William Laud as tolerant. Moreover, Roger Williams advocated the most radical tolerationist program of the 1640s, a program which flowed logically from his genuinely strong Calvinism, as I will show in chapter two. This should serve as an important warning to those historians, following

---

<sup>16</sup> Gary Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (University Park, PA, 1996), 140-41. The Independent divine John Owen’s proposed toleration, based on a specific list of ‘fundamentals,’ cut both ways by clearly identifying and condemning unacceptable forms of heterodoxy. See Worden, “Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate,” 204-207, as well as Paul C.-H Lim, “*Adiaphora*, Ecclesiology and Reformation: John Owen’s Theology of Religious Toleration in Context,” in *Persecution and pluralism*, 243-272.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Kamen, *The Rise of Toleration*, 170, 178-79; A. T. Hart, *Clergy and Society, 1600-1800* (London, 1968), 40-41.

<sup>18</sup> Avihu Zakai. “Religious Toleration and Its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War,” *Albion* 21.1 (1989), 1-33.

<sup>19</sup> See especially the various essays by Hugh Trevor-Roper on seventeenth-century ‘Erasmian’ Christianity, as well as J. I. Israel, “Toleration in Seventeenth-Century Dutch and English

Blair Worden, who suspect that Arminianism, or simply anti-Calvinism, formed the key intellectual basis for toleration in seventeenth-century England.<sup>20</sup>

Avihu Zakai's view that the separatist congregations and sectarians of the Civil War period "introduced the issue of religious toleration to the stage of the Puritan Revolution" is also unsatisfactory.<sup>21</sup> Roger Williams and Henry Robinson did repudiate the idea of a national church in their pleas for toleration. In this, they followed in the footsteps of marginal English semi-separatists and Baptists since the beginning of the century.<sup>22</sup> However, Zakai also presents the radical Independent minister John Goodwin as a separatist, and the Leveller William Walwyn as a sectarian. Goodwin did hold some unorthodox views which made him a somewhat eccentric member of the Independent party. But he wrote against the separatist churches in the late 1630s, and in 1644 he wrote in defense of *An Apologeticall Narration*, a manifesto signed by a number of prominent Independent divines.<sup>23</sup> Goodwin led a gathered church but was also pastor of a London parish from 1633 to 1646, and then again from 1649 until 1660.<sup>24</sup> William Walwyn was a sectarian in one sense, being one of the leaders of the Levellers. But as far as we know, he continued to attend his parish church throughout the Civil War period. Moreover, Walwyn upheld the value of a state Church with "a publick ministry, and parish Congregations," and hoped that this Church "may be so purged and so religiously settled, that the Puritan may have no cause of separation."<sup>25</sup>

---

Thought," in *The Exchange of Ideas: Religion, Scholarship and Art in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Simon Groenveld and Michael Wintle (Zutphen, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Worden, "Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate," 202. John Coffey argues that Hugh Trevor-Roper, as well, "has promoted a simplistic dichotomy between a progressive Arminianism and a reactionary Calvinism." See Coffey, "Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 41.4 (1998), 961-985.

<sup>21</sup> Zakai, "Religious Toleration," 33.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, [Henry Jacob], *To the right high and mightie prince, Iames by the grace of God* (1609); Thomas Helwys, *A shorte declaration of the mistery of iniquity* (1612), 69; [John Murton], *A most humble supplication of many the Kings Maiesties loyall subiects* (1621), 23-36.

<sup>23</sup> [John Goodwin], *M.S. to A.S. With a Plea for Libertie of Conscience in a Church Way* (London, 1644), 1-12. "We have," Goodwin insisted, "and do disclaim *Separation* and *Brownisme*, properly so called."

<sup>24</sup> See generally, John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-century England* (Woodbridge, UK, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> William Walwyn, *The Writings of William Walwyn*, edited by J. R. McMichael and Barbara Taft (Athens, 1989), 72, 178. On Walwyn's religious conformity, see Nicholas McDowell, *The English*

In short, the problem with Zakai's view is this: if you label all of the toleration writers of the 1640s as sectarians, then, unsurprisingly, you will find that it was the sectarians who argued for toleration! The difficulty in clearly identifying the religious party of Goodwin and Walwyn also demonstrates the fluidity of confessional boundaries in this period, something which has been observed by Christopher Hill and especially Alexandra Walsham.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the distinction between a radical 'Independent' and a 'Separatist' is not always so easy to establish in retrospect. Moreover, one could have multiple religious and political affiliations, as studies of Saturday-Sabbatarians and 'The Fifth Monarchy Men' in this period have shown.<sup>27</sup>

Zakai's discussion also omits the Royalist Jeremy Taylor's toleration tract *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647). The examples of a Royalist (Taylor), an Independent (Goodwin), a Separatist (Williams) and two educated merchants (Robinson, Walwyn) should be enough to show that there was no exclusive 'party' of toleration in Civil War England. A central goal of the second chapter of this thesis will be to examine the theological arguments for toleration among these different figures. While Coffey classifies 'radical Puritan' and 'moderate Anglican' arguments for toleration as two separate groups, I will show that – with the important exception of Williams – they used similar arguments and advocated similar views of the true nature of Christian religion in their efforts to demonstrate the necessity of a religious toleration based on liberty of conscience. Coffey's classification is useful when discussing political allegiances and social affiliations, but like many histories of this time period, it runs the risk, as Walsham puts it, of adopting "a vertical approach to the history of dissent that

---

*Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 2003), 79. It is also worth recalling William Haller's observation that "the Levellers, indeed, alone among the contending groups of the time, were not a church or a sect but a party. If they joined with the Independents and the sects to oppose persecution, it was not because they desired as a group to propagate any particular religious faith or to establish any special form of religious organization." W. Haller, *Tracts on liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1647*, Vol. I (New York, 1934), 86-87.

<sup>26</sup> C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1975), 14; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 20-21.

<sup>27</sup> D. S. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-century England* (Leiden, 1988); B.S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London, 1971).

ignores its horizontal and lateral connections with the official Church from which it was theoretically separate and distinct.”<sup>28</sup> Just like Locke in the 1680s, these writers – both ‘Anglican’ and ‘Puritan’ – set out to prove that toleration was essential to the true church and to the proper performance of true Christian religion. Differences of religious opinion and practice could be acceptable if these different views were reached by those who were doing their best to ‘do’ Christianity properly: Scripturally, rationally, studiously, peacefully, morally, and ‘conscientiously.’

The third chapter takes a very different subject from the first two, but there is an underlying thematic connection. Theological considerations, and especially eschatological hopes, played a central role in the debate on whether to extend official toleration for Jews in England in the 1650s. I will examine the ‘philosemitic’ millenarian tolerationists, including John Dury, Henry Jessey and others, who hoped for the reconciliation of Jews with Christians, and for the Restoration of an Israelite state in the Holy Land. Once again, I will suggest that a kind of religious difference – in this case, Jewish difference – could be viewed as positive and thus perhaps tolerable because this difference would have an important role to play in the coming millennial kingdom. This was a ‘teleological’ tolerance, because the millenarians expected this reconciliation and restoration to come only after the Jews had accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Nonetheless, they believed that the Jews (and the Lost Tribes of Israel) would maintain exceptional national privileges even after their conversion. Jewish difference, something eternally ordained by God, would not be abrogated by Christ, but would be established in his millennial kingdom, thus becoming a part of true Christian religion.

W. K. Jordan once remarked that the historian, “perplexed by the essentially conservative nature of the English Revolution,” is often “too much

---

<sup>28</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 29. Debora Shuger has similarly noted that the problem with diving beliefs into ‘orthodox’ and ‘subversive’ is that “the so-called subversive ideas keep surfacing, however contained, within the confines of orthodoxy,” and it is not always possible to distinguish whether a given doctrine should be identified as ‘Anglican’ or ‘Puritan.’ See D. K. Shuger. *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley, 1990), 1-8.

inclined to lend his attention and extend his admiration to fragments of thought on the periphery of English ideas during this period.”<sup>29</sup> Part of the introduction to a study of two ‘peripheral’ figures, Henry Robinson and Henry Parker, this statement was as much Jordan’s personal admission of guilt as it was a criticism of other historians. Yet one wonders just how guilty he really ought to have felt. Robinson, as Jordan himself admitted, was no provincial yeoman. He came from a family whose success as London merchants went back more than a century. He had some Oxford education and a familiarity with several languages. He and his brother were freemen of both the Mercers’ Company and the East India Company. He was appointed to an important government post as comptroller in 1649.<sup>30</sup> Robinson’s ideas may seem ‘peripheral’ in hindsight, but Robinson the man was an educated, worldly, successful and connected London merchant.

The more peripheral ideas of the English Civil War period, and particularly in the 1640s, did not necessarily emerge from some kind of ‘literary underground.’ Several of the writers whose ideas I shall examine in this thesis were not far from the centre of English political and religious life in this period. The Levellers, including William Walwyn, were a considerable political force in the late 1640s. Jeremy Taylor had been chaplain to both Charles I and Archbishop Laud, and would become a bishop himself after the Restoration. John Milton and John Dury, like Robinson, were employees of Cromwell’s government in the 1650s. John Goodwin was a popular London pastor who preached fast sermons before Parliament, actively participated in public theological disputations, and whose works would later appear in many private libraries, including John Locke’s. Henry Jessey was the leader of London’s most prominent separate congregation and was one of the select group of ministers summoned by Cromwell to attend the 1655 Conference on the subject of Jewish re-settlement in England.

Even Roger Williams, probably the most marginal of these figures, was one of the founders of the Rhode Island colony. Locke's attempt to rigidly

---

<sup>29</sup> W. K. Jordan, *Men of Substance: a Study of the Thought of Two English Revolutionaries, Henry Parker and Henry Robinson* (Chicago, 1942), 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-54, 62-65.



separate the powers and jurisdiction of Church and State was just as radical in the 1680s as it was when Williams argued for it in 1644. Locke's insistence that this separation is good for the True Church should remind us that a now oft-forgotten question - whether a proposed toleration was in the best interest of the Christian religion - was just as important a question for seventeenth-century tolerationists to answer as the question of whether it was in the best interest of the state. The primary aim of this thesis will be to explore some of the reasons tolerationists gave to explain the religious benefits of their proposed toleration.

## Chapter 1: Sceptical Arguments and the Case for Toleration

In her laudable overview of tolerance and intolerance in early modern England, Alexandra Walsham devotes about one page to a brief discussion of the relationship between toleration discourse and scepticism. After alluding to Michel de Montaigne and Sebastian Castellio, Walsham mentions two English works published in 1644 – John Goodwin’s *Theomachia* and William Walwyn’s *The Compassionate Samaritane* – as examples of tolerationist tracts which drew on a sceptical approach to the human ability to attain religious certainty. She also refers to two later irenic tracts by Henry More and Benjamin Whichcote. However, Walsham quickly adds that “scepticism per se has little place in the discourse of ‘toleration’ in early modern England. Despite our tendency to assume an ‘emotional kinship’ between indifference towards and rejection of the existence of God and the acceptance of religious pluralism, there is little to support such a link before the eighteenth century.”<sup>1</sup> She cites Thomas Hobbes as an example of an early modern sceptical thinker who advocated the repression of religious minorities. In this, Walsham is drawing on an important essay by Richard Tuck, which warns historians that it is a fallacy to assume that sceptical philosophy, by its very nature, led to arguments for toleration. However, Tuck’s essay, while valuable, is largely a study of a debate in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which then leaps into the English context with Hobbes, and finally with Locke, who increasingly inclined to toleration as the circumstances in Restoration England changed.<sup>2</sup>

While Tuck’s article rightly points out that early modern thinkers could and did use sceptical arguments to justify repression and religious persecution, Walsham has taken this observation and drawn some unconvincing conclusions. After citing two Civil War tolerationists and two Restoration irenicists who employed sceptical arguments to argue for some kind of religious tolerance, she

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), 244.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Tuck, “Scepticism and Toleration in the Seventeenth Century,” in Susan Mendus (ed.), *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1988), 21-36.

cites only Hobbes and Tuck as evidence that “scepticism per se has little place” in early modern English toleration discourse. Moreover, her statement becomes even more problematic when she equates scepticism to “indifference towards and rejection of the existence of God.” Couched in these terms, it is not surprising that one will not find an important link between scepticism and toleration before the eighteenth century, because scepticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not mean religious indifference or atheism. One of Montaigne’s most notable and widely-read disciples, Pierre Charron, was a Roman Catholic theologian.<sup>3</sup> To think of early modern Christian sceptics as atheists or necessarily lukewarm to religion is either to impose onto them an anachronistic definition of scepticism, or simply to accept the polemical accusations of their detractors.

In this chapter, therefore, I will assess the presence and importance of sceptical arguments in the toleration literature of the Civil War period. I would like to stress that I am not suggesting that sceptical arguments are necessary elements for an argument for religious toleration. Roger Williams’ *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* (1644) is an example of a tolerationist tract which does not employ sceptical arguments. Nor am I suggesting that an inclination towards tolerance is an inevitable result of sceptical reasoning, as part of my discussion will make clear. However, it is my intention to contest Walsham’s claim, and to assert the presence of at least some form of sceptical argument in a significant number of tolerationist tracts in this period. First, however, I will very quickly review some of the more influential forms of sceptical argument in regards to religion in early modern western Europe.

First, it is important to remember that someone who employs some sceptical arguments is not necessarily a thoroughly sceptical thinker. Sebastian Castellio, the sixteenth-century French Reformed theologian, and one of the early Protestant tolerationist writers, is an example of a figure whose ‘scepticism’ may be in dispute. Castellio is not discussed in a recent volume on *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*. The editor, Alan Levine, justifies Castellio’s omission on the grounds that his arguments for toleration were

---

<sup>3</sup> Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford, 2003), 57-61.

“fundamentally religious, not based on skepticism.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Richard Popkin’s seminal work on *The History of Scepticism* refers to Castellio as exhibiting a ‘partial scepticism.’ In his defense of the condemned heretic Michael Servetus, Castellio attacked Calvin and Beza’s claims to religious certainty. He argued that while some parts of Scripture were clear beyond dispute, others were more difficult and obscure, and could not be resolved into a single, certain interpretation. As Popkin puts it, for Castellio, “there is a time for believing and a time for doubting ... on a great many questions, two contradictory views are equally probable.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the label ‘partial sceptic’ seems appropriate.

A much more thoroughgoing Christian scepticism emerged from the works of Michel de Montaigne and his followers, especially the Catholic theologian Pierre Charron. Popkin names Montaigne and Charron as the two sceptical writers with the most profound influence on seventeenth-century thought. Montaigne expressed a complete lack of confidence in the capacity of unassisted human reason to know anything with certainty, including in matters of religion. True religion must therefore be wholly based on faith, because no human foundation can support or attain divine knowledge. “Our faith is not of our own acquiring,” Montaigne wrote, “it is a pure present of another’s liberality. It is not by reasoning or by our understanding that we have received our religion; it is by external authority and command.”<sup>6</sup> A complete sceptic would understand that he could only attain true knowledge or faith by the grace of God. Unable to put forward with certainty any positive views of his own, the sceptic would accept the laws and customs of his community, and the divinely-mandated tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> Charron, like Montaigne, argued that complete scepticism provides the basis for a religion based solely on faith, because the act of God’s grace is the only acceptable basis for certain knowledge. Men could find

---

<sup>4</sup> Alan Levine (ed.), *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration* (Lanham, 1999), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 11-13.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 44-48, 49.

<sup>7</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 51-55.

supposedly good reasons to justify any position in a dispute, with no way to know who was correct.<sup>8</sup>

This ‘Christian Pyrrhonism’ became useful for Catholic apologetics and polemics against all sorts of infidels, especially Calvinists. Charron had argued that *Sola Scriptura* was a hopeless way to attain religious certainty, because Scripture itself was little more than a set of words without the Church’s infallible authority to interpret it properly. Later Jesuit controversialists in the seventeenth century developed arguments to undermine Calvinist belief by raising a series of sceptical problems. Like Montaigne and Charron, they presented faith in the infallible authority of the Church as the only acceptable answer to these difficulties.<sup>9</sup> Thus, while Castellio’s arguments for tolerance of divergent opinions made use of a ‘partial scepticism,’ Roman Catholic apologists at the turn of the seventeenth century were using far more thoroughly sceptical arguments as a way to defend the infallibility of the Church and to attack the epistemological foundations of Protestant faith.

But what if probable knowledge, rather than certain knowledge, was good enough? This is what Popkin calls “constructive or mitigated scepticism,” which “could accept the full force of the sceptical attack on the possibility of human knowledge, in the sense of necessary truths about the nature of reality, and yet allow for the possibility of knowledge in a lesser sense, as convincing or probable truths about appearances.”<sup>10</sup> In England, intellectual historians have frequently found this ‘mitigated scepticism,’ combined with a probabilistic theory of knowledge, in the writings of the Great Tew Circle during the 1630s, and particularly in William Chillingworth’s *The Religion of Protestants* (1638). According to John Aubrey, Chillingworth ‘much delighted’ in the sceptical works of Sextus Empiricus. A fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, Chillingworth had been converted to Roman Catholicism by the Jesuit missionary Thomas Piercy (Fisher) in 1628, but he returned to the Church of England in the early 1630s and became

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 57-61.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 65-77; See also Martin I.J. Griffin, Jr, *Latitudinarianism is the Seventeenth-century Church of England*, annotated by R. H. Popkin, edited by Lila Freedman (Leiden, 1992), 54.

<sup>10</sup> Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 112-13.

engaged in controversies with Jesuit theologians. *The Religion of Protestants* was the product of one such controversy.<sup>11</sup> In the next chapter, I shall examine Chillingworth's approach to reason, Scripture and conscience. But the subject of his 'mitigated scepticism' has already been explained well by Hugh Trevor-Roper:

Allowing that absolute certainty is unattainable, rejecting alike the infallible authority of Rome and the rigid dogma of the Calvinists, and yet seeking a solid base on which to build, [Chillingworth] settled for a lesser degree of certainty, 'moral certainty' which is attainable by natural reason ... for natural reason is itself an emanation of the moral order written by God in the hearts of man. Such natural reason, recognizing its own limits, is essential to faith as to knowledge ... it is not infallible – there is no infallibility anywhere – but it is the only criterion we have: probability is the most to which we can aspire. Rationally vindicated probability, not a 'vain and arrogant pretence of infallibility', is the answer of a robust spirit to the seventeenth-century 'Pyrrhonist crisis.'<sup>12</sup>

Chillingworth no doubt had a very intimate understanding of the sceptical arguments used by Roman Catholic controversialists. He responded by denying all human claims to infallibility, including those of received tradition. Any claim to religious certainty is akin to "Deifying our owne Interpretations." But if there is no certain religious knowledge, he asked, what shall we say to the person who seeks assurance of his own salvation? First, he urged that person to read Scripture. But how can one be assured that an interpretation of Scripture is the right one? "Not knowing absolutely all truth," he answered, "nay not all profitable truth, and not being free from error; but endeavoring to know the truth and obey it, and endeavouring to be free from error, is by this way the onely condition of salvation."<sup>13</sup> In this way, Chillingworth could use sceptical arguments to refute all claims to certain knowledge, and yet allow that sufficiently probable knowledge could be achieved by a Christian's best efforts.

---

<sup>11</sup> For more on Chillingworth's life, controversies and conversions, see R. R. Orr, *Reason and Authority: The Thought of William Chillingworth* (Oxford, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Great Tew Circle," in *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth-century Essays* (Chicago, 1987), 206. See also Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 45-70, 158; Gary Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (University Park, 1996) 149ff.

<sup>13</sup> William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation* (Oxford, 1638), 198, 220-21.

For Chillingworth, the search for truth in the Bible, along with the efforts to live a pious life according to the results of that search, was the essence of Protestantism. It had more saving power than the adherence to a human interpretation presented as certainty. His friend Lucius Cary, the Viscount Falkland and the host of the Great Tew Circle, proposed a similar idea in his *Of the Infallibility of the Church of Rome* (1637, pub. 1650). Falkland questioned whether a man would be saved simply on account of “his *parents* beleeve, or the Religion of his *Country*, or some such accident.” Even if the Church of Rome were actually infallible, Falkland wrote, the man who denies its infallibility and instead “imploies his reason to seek, if it be true,” should be in equal standing to the man who accepts its truth implicitly and without question.<sup>14</sup> As James Ellison has put it, Falkland and Chillingworth articulated “a sceptical philosophy which maintains that honestly searching after Christian truth is more acceptable to God than blind dogmatism.”<sup>15</sup>

It has become common among intellectual historians to see the latitudinarian Anglicans or the Cambridge Platonists of the Restoration period as the intellectual heirs of the Great Tew men.<sup>16</sup> However, the lone representative of this perspective during the Civil War toleration debate is usually held to be Jeremy Taylor’s *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647). S. R. Gardiner contended that “three-fourths of [Taylor]’s arguments were written under the influence” of Chillingworth’s *The Religion of Protestants*.<sup>17</sup> This narrative, which holds some truth, becomes problematic if it posits that some sort of high church ‘liberal Anglican’ tradition held a monopoly on ‘mitigated scepticism’ in seventeenth-

---

<sup>14</sup> Lucius Cary, *His Discourse of Infallibility, with an answer to it, and his Lordships Reply* (London, 1651), b4-c.

<sup>15</sup> James Ellison, *George Sandys: Travel, Colonialism and Tolerance in the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge, 2002), 219.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1872); Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 89-91; Trevor-Roper, “The Great Tew Circle,” 229; John Marshall, “John Locke and Latitudinarianism,” in *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, 1642-49, Vol. III* (London, 1901) 310-311.

century England, or on the Protestant truth-seeking 'sceptical philosophy' described above by Ellison. As I will show, this is not the case.<sup>18</sup>

First, it is important to note that Falkland and Chillingworth were not advocates for toleration. Neither of them ever set out an organized theory of toleration or religious liberty. Their world changed dramatically with the onset of the Civil War in the 1640s, and it led both of them to an early death in 1643.<sup>19</sup> Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* was published four years later. It is possible, but ultimately fruitless, to muse over whether either Chillingworth or Falkland would have advanced a similar argument for toleration in the 1640s - certainly none of the surviving members of the Great Tew group did. The political circumstances at the time Taylor published his book were vastly different from those in 1643 or 1638. The Royalists were now in a decidedly disadvantaged position; many had gone into exile abroad, and the King had been driven from his Court at Oxford. Taylor, formerly a chaplain to the King and a favourite of Archbishop Laud<sup>20</sup>, now found himself pleading for toleration, that "loser's creed," as Andrew Pettegree has called it, which was usually "the party cry of the disappointed, the dispossessed, or the seriously confused."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in the dedicatory epistle to Christopher Lord Hatton, Taylor prefaces his argument by noting that he has written it in the midst of "this great storm which hath dasht the Vessell of the Church all in pieces."<sup>22</sup>

Taylor, like Chillingworth, denies any human ability to determine whether a religious opinion is, in itself, true or erroneous. He implores the reader not to

---

<sup>18</sup> This point has been made indirectly by John Coffey, as part of his argument that 'mitigated' scepticism more often provided the ground for seventeenth-century English toleration proposals than the 'radical' scepticism of someone like Hobbes. Coffey cites Chillingworth, John Milton, John Goodwin, the Baptist Samuel Richardson, and John Locke as examples of seventeenth-century mitigated sceptics who advocated religious toleration. See John Coffey, "Scepticism, Dogmatism and Toleration in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Persecution and pluralism: Calvinists and religious minorities in early modern Europe, 1550-1700*, edited by Richard Bonney and D.J.B. Trim (Bern, 2006), 152-167.

<sup>19</sup> Trevor-Roper, "The Great Tew Circle," 178.

<sup>20</sup> F. L. Huntley, *Jeremy Taylor and the Great Rebellion: A Study of His Mind and Temper in Controversy*. (Ann Arbor, MI, 1970), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Pettegree, "The politics of tolerance in the Free Netherlands," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner. (Cambridge, 1996) 198.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse of The Liberty of Prophesying* (London, 1647), i.



mistake confidence in one's own judgment for complete certainty.<sup>23</sup> He takes a historical approach to Church doctrine, and points out that every church changes its doctrines in every age, "either by bringing in new Doctrines, or by contradicting her old." Every church except that of Rome has conceded its own fallibility, and even the early Fathers were susceptible to a whole catalogue of errors.<sup>24</sup> In a lengthy digression, he devotes twenty-three pages to the debate between adult baptism and infant baptism. After presenting both sides of the debate in a fair-handed manner, he maintains his own belief in infant baptism, but insists that "there is no direct impiety in the opinion" of adult baptism, and that there is no way to be certain which practice is more acceptable to God in itself, provided it is done sincerely and with piety.<sup>25</sup> Finally, he argues that some level of deception is inevitable for all men, and asks whether "if we, who are so apt to be deceived ... should persecute a dis-agreeing person, we are not sure we do not fight against God."<sup>26</sup> This argument, derived from the warning of Gamaliel to the Jewish Elders (Acts 5:38), was a common proof-text for religious liberty in this period.

In his answer to the pervasive problem of uncertainty, Taylor also sounds like Chillingworth, particularly when he asserts that "it is not required of us not to be in error, but that we endeavour to avoid it."<sup>27</sup> Any one who has "a minde desirous of truth" can never be a heretic; he may err, but God will forgive him because he did his best.<sup>28</sup> If we "search for truth without design," he says, we may succeed or fail in this search, but most importantly, "we shall be secured" even if we miss some of it.<sup>29</sup> Thus, like Chillingworth, Taylor uses sceptical arguments to stress human fallibility and to deny the possibility of certainty in religious knowledge, yet he re-assures his readers that the active desire for truth is sufficient for salvation. Frank Huntley has written that "the sceptical recognition of the limits of reason leads Taylor into tolerating opinions ... which are based on

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, xxxii, 154, 196.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 223-245.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 37.

it; but more importantly, his scepticism defines the true grounds for determining religious truth” by relying on reason to choose the more probable of two competing ‘truths.’<sup>30</sup> While we may question the claim that Taylor was ‘led’ into toleration this way, the sceptical critique of religious persecution does make up a considerable part of his case for toleration.

As mentioned above, the argument that persecution raised the unhappy prospect of ‘fighting against God,’ using Acts 5:38 as a proof-text, was common in the toleration discourse of this period. It was developed most fully by John Goodwin, the heterodox Independent divine, in a 1644 tract called *Theomachia; or the grand impudence of men running the hazard of fighting against God*. In this work, adapted from two sermons, Goodwin performs a very rigorous scholarly exegesis of Acts 5:38-39. “A mistake or weaknesse of judgement,” he writes, “may befall the best and faithfulest of men,” and even a Minister may accidentally “[preach] error up and truth downe.” Even the most learned and devoted Christians may fall into error, and they may even teach it. But this innocent error is harmless compared to “when men assume an Authoritative power ... to suppress or silence” debate about religious doctrine or practice.<sup>31</sup> In the same year, Goodwin published an anonymous work which contains similar warnings about fallibility, and argues that it is better to countenance error than to risk smiting God’s truth by mistake.<sup>32</sup> The latter tract, interestingly, cites Pierre Charron on the importance of using reason to evaluate a proposition,<sup>33</sup> which indicates that Goodwin was familiar with at least some of the writings of the French sceptical theologian.

Goodwin’s most controversial tolerationist work, *Hagiomastix, or the scourge of the Saints* (1646), goes further, and the sceptical quality of its argument has been noted recently by John Coffey in his biography of Goodwin.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> Huntley, *Jeremy Taylor*, 47-48.

<sup>31</sup> John Goodwin, *Theomachia; or the grand impudence of men running the hazard of fighting against God* (London, 1644), 11.

<sup>32</sup> [John Goodwin], *M.S. to A.S. With a Plea for Libertie of Conscience in a Church Way* (London, 1644), 50.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>34</sup> John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution* (Woodbridge, UK, 2006), 143-144.

Just as Taylor finds that it is impossible to refute with certainty the doctrine of adult baptism, Goodwin in *Hagiomastix* argues that the Bible never explicitly affirms either a Trinitarian or a Unitarian version of God, and therefore, he argues that no one can claim with absolute certainty that Antitrinitarianism is a damnable heresy without the intervention of their own reasonings and deductions, “which are confessedly fallible.”<sup>35</sup> Even more shockingly, he asserts that all arguments and proofs which can be brought forward to prove the truth of the Gospel or the divinity of the Scriptures are only probable.<sup>36</sup>

Using a kind of reasoning that Catholic controversialists would have appreciated, Goodwin wonders which Scriptures are proven, with absolute certainty, to be the Word of God. The Hebrew and Greek, potentially corrupted by centuries of human transcription? The English, their meaning potentially altered by imperfect translation?<sup>37</sup> Yet Goodwin is no secret Jesuit; he does not believe in Papal infallibility. He is not trying to undermine the Protestant religion, but rather to save it from a “relapse ... into the lethargie of Popish sloathfulness and servilitie” which would result from allowing “our Teachers to exercise a Dominion over our Faith.”<sup>38</sup> In a subsequent pamphlet, he accuses the London Presbyterian ministers of attempting to transfer “the chaire of Papall infallibility” to Sion College, and proclaims that the English people, free from ‘Popish ignorance and superstition,’ are no longer bound to believe whatever the Church teaches without questioning it.<sup>39</sup>

For Goodwin, part of the true essence of Protestant religion must be the ability to question anything that relies upon the works and thoughts of human beings. Ideally, in all matters of Religion, each man should “not swallow any thing by a loose credulity,” but closely examine every doctrine and practice before accepting it as faith.<sup>40</sup> Since no man or church can presume to be free of error, Goodwin suggests that this close individual examination of all things is the best a

---

<sup>35</sup> John Goodwin, *Hagiomastix, or the scourge of the Saints* (London, 1646), 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>38</sup> Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, “To the Reader,” Section 18.

<sup>39</sup> John Goodwin, *Sion-Colledg visited* (London, 1648/49), 4, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, 108.

Christian can hope to do, because at least he will not appear a hypocrite or ‘lukewarme’ before God. This approach, despite being framed in different language, is not so different from the mitigated scepticism of Chillingworth, Falkland and Taylor. Is this not also what James Ellison has called “a sceptical philosophy which maintains that honestly searching after Christian truth is more acceptable to God than blind dogmatism?”

Many of these themes can also be found in Henry Robinson’s *Liberty of Conscience* (1643/44). Like Taylor and Goodwin, Robinson uses Gamaliel’s warning (Acts 5:38) as a proof-text, and warns that those who argue for religious persecution cannot discern error from truth with certainty, and therefore run the risk of fighting against God.<sup>41</sup> Also like Goodwin, he suggests that a Christian may be found careless or negligent with his religion if he does not “examine the opinions and doctrines which are taught” by the authorized religion of the state. He even sounds like Falkland when he argues that “to be of a Religion because it is countenanced by the law in that Countrey where thou livest, or because most men are of the same, is no good reason.” He insists that there is no middle way between a lazy, careless ‘implicit faith’ and a careful practice of individual judgment.<sup>42</sup> Like Taylor, Robinson notes that even the best churches throughout history have been in error, from the early fathers to the present, and declares that “no church can possibly be sure to be without a mixture of error and superstition.” Thus the problem with Roman Catholicism is not so much that it errs, as all churches do, but that it claims to be infallible.<sup>43</sup>

Robinson’s solution to the problem of uncertainty is also a familiar one. “I conceive it may be easily observed,” he writes, “that such as study the variety of opinions, and trie the spirits out of a zeale to truth, choosing their religion by their own judgements, though erroneous, are yet more zealous of God’s worship, and conscionable towards men.”<sup>44</sup> It is the true Christian’s ‘zeale to truth,’ like Taylor’s “minde desirous of truth,” that will go further toward his salvation than

---

<sup>41</sup> [Henry Robinson]. *Liberty of Conscience: or the sole means to obtaine Peace and Truth* (London, 1643/44), 35-36.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, sig. a4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 38-39, 48, 56.

his acceptance of any particular doctrine or practice. Yet compared to Taylor and even Goodwin, Robinson describes a more radically engaged form of trial. It does not just examine and evaluate every doctrine or practice that it passively receives; it suggests that one should actively seek out all sorts of unusual opinions.

William Walwyn, a merchant autodidact like Robinson, advocates something similar in his tolerationist tracts of the 1640s. Despite having apparently remained at his parish church all his life, Walwyn claims that he has engaged with all sorts of dissenting groups, with the intention of hearing all and judging for himself. In a 1645/46 tract written against the Presbyterian heresiographer Thomas Edwards, he claims:

I have addicted my selfe to know and understand all the severall doctrines and waies of worship that are extant, and for that end have taken liberty to hear and to observe all: it is that I might be able to judge rightly of their differences, to vindicate them when the are wronged: and to advise them for their good: in doing whereof, I have gained much good.<sup>45</sup>

In an anonymous pamphlet published two months earlier, *Toleration Justified*, Walwyn recommends a similar open-minded approach to others in matters of religious opinion.<sup>46</sup> And in another pamphlet later in the year, Walwyn argues that men have different degrees of understanding, but that “weaknesse of understanding” cannot be sinful “where there is due endeavour after knowledge.” In a 1647 work, he declares there are many ‘good people’ who “accustome themselves to try and examine all things” in matters of religion.<sup>47</sup> Thus, Walwyn, like Robinson, advocates a search for Christian truth which includes an active engagement with different (but still Christian) doctrines and practices. Ultimately, however, all three of Goodwin, Walwyn and Robinson resemble Chillingworth in their use of sceptical arguments to refute all claims to infallibility or absolute religious certainty, and propose instead that the “due endeavour after knowledge”

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, sig. a4.

<sup>45</sup> William Walwyn, *The Writings of William Walwyn*, edited by J. R. McMichael and Barbara Taft (Athens, 1989), 177.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 229, 265-66.

is the best way to be assured of salvation.<sup>48</sup> Whether or not they were familiar with Chillingworth's work, it is clear that 'mitigated scepticism' in seventeenth-century English Protestantism was not the exclusive property of the 'liberal Anglican' tradition.

Of all the toleration writers of the 1640s, the Leveller Walwyn is unquestionably the one whose scepticism is most readily identifiable. In his *Just Defence* (1649), he cites Charron's 'Of Humane Wisdom' (*De la Sagesse*) as a book he found pleasing and profitable, and quotes lengthy passages from Montaigne's *Essays*, although he adds that he does not agree with him in all things.<sup>49</sup> In *The Compassionate Samaritane* (1644), he argues for liberty of conscience partly on the grounds of "the uncertainty of knowledge in this life: no man, nor no sort of men can presume of an unerring spirit," despite having confidence in their own judgments. This claim is re-iterated time and again in many of his pamphlets throughout the 1640s. As result, he warns, persecutors may accidentally suppress truth instead of error. Like Taylor and Robinson, Walwyn points out that the early Fathers erred, and that countless churches in history have been guilty of error.<sup>50</sup> Remarking on the historical mutability of church doctrine in a 1646 pamphlet, he wonders whether today's heresy will become tomorrow's orthodoxy. "Those tenets which are now accounted heresies," he writes, "may be in the countenanced truthes of the next age, as what formerly was accounted error, is now esteemed truth."<sup>51</sup> Like Falkland and Robinson, Walwyn explains in a 1647 tract that most people are drawn into a religion by education and custom, the result of the circumstances of one's birth and upbringing, and that "many have no other foundation" for their religion. These "Champions for whats in fashion," he argues, are "ever running with the streame" and therefore cannot

---

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas McDowell has recently argued that "belief, for Walwyn as for Taylor, is a personal matter for each individual to derive from an ongoing process of rational examination." See McDowell, "The Ghost in the Marble: Jeremy Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying (1647) and its Readers," in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene. (Aldershot, UK, 2007). 180.

<sup>49</sup> Walwyn, *The Writings of William Walwyn*, 399, 401-406.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 104, 136, 261, 284.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 242.

be said to be “truly religious.”<sup>52</sup> There is thus a consistent sceptical strand of argument which pervades most of Walwyn’s toleration tracts throughout the 1640s, stressing the uncertainty of religious knowledge, the inevitability of error, the historical mutability of doctrine, and the wisdom of seeking out new interpretations, as opposed to the acceptance of one’s received religion.

It is important to re-iterate that the presence of sceptical arguments in several toleration tracts of this period does not mean that a link between scepticism and toleration is necessary or inescapable. Rather, as the examples of Charron and later Jesuit writers show, this kind of Christian scepticism was a form of argument that could be put to different uses. It was a corrosive form of argumentation whose purpose was generally to erode confidence in an established epistemological system, religious or otherwise. But for any early modern Christian writer who used it to tear something down, the ultimate goal was to build up something new in its place, not to leave the reader in a state of permanent radical doubt. The probabilistic theory of religious knowledge established by Chillingworth and others, firmly grounded in the individual reading of the Scriptures, was intended to defend Protestantism from Catholic controversialists and from the claims to divine revelation of the so-called ‘enthusiasts.’<sup>53</sup> In light of the unusual political circumstances of the tumultuous 1640s, with the collapse of censorship and the rising fear of sectaries and religious novelty, Taylor, Goodwin, Robinson and Walwyn seized upon the sceptical critique of religious certainty and, like Chillingworth, used a probabilistic epistemology as the theoretical ground for distinctly Protestant proposals for toleration.

Nonetheless, as the example of Roger Williams shows, Protestant writers were capable of producing arguments for toleration without employing a sceptical critique of religious certainty. Williams’s *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* (1644) does not wrestle with the problems of assured salvation or inevitable human error. As I will show in the next chapter, the tone of Williams’s tract is confident, strongly Calvinist, and built upon a radically separatist ecclesiology.

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 265-66.

<sup>53</sup> For Scripture as the antidote to ‘enthusiasm’, see Michael Heyd, *‘Be Sober and Reasonable’*: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995).

Another example, John Milton, does not really serve as evidence either way. After his *Areopagitica* (1644), Milton was largely silent on the subject of religious toleration and liberty of conscience until his treatise *Of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659), and then again until *Of True Religion* (1673), published in the context of another debate. Both of the latter tracts mention the fallibility of the magistrate, a result of his ‘humane frailty to err,’ and warn against the possibility that he may suppress religious truth instead of error. Both insist that the only heretic is “he who holds opinions in religion professdly from tradition or his own inventions and not from Scripture but rather against it.”<sup>54</sup> But the scepticism of these works pales in comparison to that found in Taylor, Goodwin, Robinson and especially Walwyn.

Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning Samuel Fisher, the erudite Baptist-turned-Quaker, who advocated a radically universal form of toleration in the 1650s. In his enormous *Rusticus ad Academicos* (1660), Fisher agrees that the original prophets and apostles were divinely inspired, but argues that the seventeenth-century Biblical text cannot be guaranteed infallible after centuries of translation and transcription, as well as problems of typesetting and publication that plague all material books.<sup>55</sup> Unlike more orthodox writers like Goodwin, who made this observation but continued to argue for the highly probable divinity of the Scriptures, Fisher uses this uncertainty to claim that orthodox Protestant Biblicism is no different from Islamic reliance on the Qur’an or Roman Catholic reliance on tradition. Fisher thus identifies Protestant Bible-worship as just another example of a religion based on custom. As Nicholas McDowell aptly puts it, “Fisher compares Calvinist idolatry of the Bible with the Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary. In rejecting the Bible as a graven image, Fisher represents himself as continuing the process of Reformation iconoclasm to destroy the idol of

---

<sup>54</sup> John Milton, *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (London, 1659), 29-30; idem, *Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best means may be us’d against the growth of Popery* (London, 1673), 5-6.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 2003), 150, 165-67.



textuality.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, in McDowell’s view, Fisher “stands as the founder of a learned strand of Quakerism which developed in the sectarian melting pot of mid-seventeenth-century Holland and which subjected the Christian tradition to rational and sceptical critique.”<sup>57</sup> With tradition already discredited, Fisher’s sceptical critique eliminates even Scripture as a reliable basis for faith, and instead argues that continuing Revelation, in the form of the Quaker belief in the ‘Inner Light’, is the only reliable source for religious belief.

W. K. Jordan once described the ‘temper’ of Henry Robinson and his associates in the 1640s as “rationalistic and sceptical,” and argued that Robinson’s religious philosophy was “wholly individualistic.”<sup>58</sup> It is important to remember that in many ways, this evaluation remains basically correct. Yet it also calls to mind John Coffey’s recent observation on how historians have treated John Goodwin: “They highlighted his humanism, not his scholasticism; his scepticism, not his dogmatism. While delighting in his radical heterodoxy, they slighted his conservative orthodoxy.”<sup>59</sup> The contrast of Goodwin’s and Robinson’s relatively orthodox Protestant views with those of Samuel Fisher should underscore the importance of this insight. For all of their sceptical arguments and individualist soteriology, the English toleration writers of the 1640s such as Robinson, Goodwin, Taylor and Walwyn were still self-consciously orthodox representatives of Protestantism in their affirmation that true Christian religion must be grounded in the divine authority of Scripture, and in their sense that *Sola Scriptura* was the fundamental tenet of religious belief which distinguished the good Protestant from the ‘Papist.’ As Coffey rightly points out, the problem with the remarks of authors in the ‘Whiggish’ tradition, like Jordan, is not so much that they are wrong, but that they are only selectively correct.

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 166, 180. See also Christopher Hill’s chapter on Fisher in his *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), which has been influential in generating new interest in Fisher over the last forty years. Hill sees Fisher as a neglected precursor to Enlightenment thought, and approvingly cites Fisher’s critique of Biblicism as “the end of the authority of the book; but by no means a return to the authority of tradition. It is simply the end of authority” (267-68).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>58</sup> W. K. Jordan, *Men of Substance: a Study of the Thought of Two English Revolutionaries, Henry Parker and Henry Robinson* (Chicago, 1942), 87, 94, 100.

<sup>59</sup> Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 9.

Similarly, while McDowell has good reason to suggest that Samuel Fisher's rejection of the Bible as infallible revelation "heralds the deist controversy" to come at the end of the century, it is also important to remember that Fisher was not a deist, and he was careful to distinguish between the Inner Light and human reason.<sup>60</sup> With the benefit of our hindsight, knowing that the 'Enlightenment,' deism and atheism were lurking around the corner, it might seem easy to dismiss the notion of a Christian scepticism (Catholic or Protestant) as an unsustainable halfway house. It becomes tempting to imagine these seventeenth-century figures as people who were too afraid of the 'real' implications of sceptical philosophy to take it to its logical conclusion. This approach, I believe, does them an injustice. For all of their differences, the fideism of sceptical Roman Catholics, the individualistic Scriptural probabilism of sceptical Protestants, and the Inner Light of the sceptical 'enthusiast' Fisher were all examples of genuine early modern Christian epistemologies, prescriptions for seeking God's salvation in an uncertain world which they believed had been torn apart by competing claims to religious truth. On the one hand, as I have shown, a number of the seventeenth-century English proposals for toleration and liberty of conscience were built partly upon a sceptical epistemology. On the other hand, both the argument for toleration and its epistemological foundation were intended for the achievement of a truly saving form of Christianity. Religious indifference and atheism were simply out of the question.

---

<sup>60</sup> McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination*, 175, 181.

## Chapter 2: Labourers after Truth: The Process of Faith and the ‘Conscientious Man’

In the prefatory epistle to his unpublished theological manuscript *De Doctrina Christiana* (Christian Doctrine), John Milton explains the reason for his attempt to write a work of theology. “I decided,” he writes,

not to depend upon the belief or judgment of others in religious questions for this reason: God has revealed the way of eternal salvation only to the individual faith of each man, and demands of us that any man who wishes to be saved should work out his beliefs for himself. So I made up my mind to puzzle out a religious creed for myself by my own exertions ... In this the only authority I accepted was God’s self-revelation, and accordingly I read and pondered the Holy Scriptures themselves with all possible diligence, never sparing in any way.<sup>1</sup>

Expressing his dissatisfaction with the works of professional theologians, and emphasizing his “long hours of study,” Milton adds that “in religion as in all other things, I discerned, God offers all his rewards not to those who are thoughtless and credulous, but to those who labor constantly and seek tirelessly after truth.” The search after truth is a necessary part of true religion, and Milton encourages his readers to judge all things for themselves, following only the authority of the Bible. Christians should be free to “sift and winnow any doctrine,” because “without this freedom to which I refer, there is no religion and no gospel.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in his 1659 text on religious liberty, he insists that those who believe only what they “apprehend the scripture to say,” regardless of the opinions of theologians, “are not heretics, but the best protestants.”<sup>3</sup>

Milton’s idea of a fundamental Christian liberty to engage with all doctrines is similar to the arguments of William Walwyn and Henry Robinson which I considered in the last chapter. In his 1673 pamphlet *Of True Religion*, he also sounds like Walwyn, Robinson and Jeremy Taylor when he argues that errors are not damnable if they are the result of “misunderstanding the Scripture after all sincere endeavours to understand it rightly.” Those who makes such errors,

---

<sup>1</sup> John Milton, *Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol. VI*, edited by Don M. Wolfe (New Haven, 1973), 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-123.

despite the sincerity of their ‘endeavours’ to understand Scripture properly, “have done what man can do: God will assuredly pardon them.”<sup>4</sup> Milton’s praise for the ‘sincere endeavours’ of the truth-seeking but fallible Christian is similar to Robinson’s “zeale to truth,” Taylor’s “minde desirous of truth,” and Walwyn’s “due endeavour after knowledge,” as examined in the last chapter. Like all of these writers, Milton emphasizes God’s forgiveness for man’s weakness of understanding, provided that each man makes use of his best efforts to seek out and embrace religious truth in the words of the Bible.

The purpose of this chapter is to make sense of these ‘sincere endeavours’ which were so celebrated by those English Protestant writers of the Civil War period who argued for toleration based upon liberty of conscience. Like Taylor, Walwyn, Robinson and John Goodwin, Milton describes the religion of the true Protestant as a work of labour and industry. He upholds the Bible as the only acceptable authority for a Protestant. He emphasizes his long hours of study, his careful reading and considering of the words of the Bible, his tireless search for truth in those words, and his constantly labouring for an individually formed true Christian faith. Like William Chillingworth, Milton and these other writers believe that God will only forgive a Christian for his error if he has made every attempt to avoid it. These efforts are crucial elements for their understanding of true religion. Their insistence upon liberty of conscience, I shall argue, exists only within the framework of an especially strenuous form of Protestantism, which understands *Sola Scriptura* as an imperative and an obligation for all Christians to build their faith upon the text of the Bible. I shall also examine the way in which these writers appeal not only to Scripture, but also to the use of individual ‘reason,’ as way of distinguishing tolerable and ‘conscientious’ heterodoxy from intolerable and dangerous heresy. Finally, I shall contend that their arguments for liberty of conscience were meant to protect a certain type of ideal Protestant subject, the ‘conscientious man,’ who labours after truth, builds his faith upon the twin pillars of Scripture and individual reason, and professes his faith in a

---

<sup>3</sup> John Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes* (London 1659), 21-22.

<sup>4</sup> John Milton, *Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best means may be us’d against the growth of Popery* (London, 1673), 6.

peaceable and morally acceptable manner. No form of toleration, it should be remembered, is meant for everybody. The goal of this chapter, then, is to understand both who toleration was for and who it was not for, according to these writers and their understanding of true religion.

### **An Industrious Biblicism**

While his conclusions were unusual, Milton's strenuous form of Protestantism which described Christian faith in the language of industry and labour was nothing new. The leading moderate Puritan proponents of 'covenant theology' in early modern England, including William Perkins (1558-1602) and John Preston (1587-1628), represented predestined grace as an agreement made between God and the individual believer, provided that the believer receive Christ, repent of his sins, and 'labour' to perfect his faith.<sup>5</sup> With the explosive growth of English Bible production at the turn of the seventeenth century, this strenuous approach to faith was often applied specifically to Bible-study. A recent estimate suggests that between 1564 and 1616, the English Bible appeared in 211 different editions, selling about 422,000 copies to English population of around 4,000,000 people.<sup>6</sup> New devotional works, such as Nicholas Byfield's *Directions for the private reading of the Scriptures* (1618), helped to instruct lay readers in the proper method for reading the Bible. Byfield encouraged readers to read actively, methodically, and meticulously, marking passages with a pen or pencil, making a little book of notes, and forming a list of questions to ask a minister.<sup>7</sup> For many in this period, there was a deep sense that if English Protestants were to regard *Sola Scriptura* as the foundation for their religion, they must work to

---

<sup>5</sup> Perkins was fond of preaching that "we must labour to get Christ," and that "we must labour above all things for this true faith, to beleve the word, and then we shall well and easily remember it." William Perkins, *Lectures vpon the three first chapters of the Reuelation* (London, 1604), sig. A, 18. See also John Preston, *The New Covenant, or the Saint's Portion* (London, 1629), 175-76.

<sup>6</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *The Social Universe of the English Bible* (Cambridge, 2010), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Champion, "'Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures': Biblical Criticism, Clerical Learning and Lay Readers, c. 1650-1720," in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Aldershot, 2007), 210-211. Byfield's work went through 4 editions by 1648.

improve their faith through a direct and personal engagement with the word of God.

Nonetheless, as Justin Champion points out, while mainstream English Protestant culture in the early seventeenth century did encourage private reading of the Scriptures, this was meant to fortify and improve one's existing faith, not to encourage novelty and personal interpretation.<sup>8</sup> Yet this emphasis on equal individual access to God's word could, under appropriate circumstances, be the foundation for a more radical point of view. Like some of the Dutch Remonstrants of the 1620s, including Simon Episcopius,<sup>9</sup> the English toleration authors of the 1640s recommended the diligent examination of Scripture, and extended the Protestant principle of individual access to God's word into an obligation not only to read, but to interpret.

In his *Liberty of Conscience* (1643/44), Henry Robinson wonders why God has left Scripture open to so many different interpretations, and asks if it is possible that this was done "to make men more diligent and inquisitive to search after truth, and conscientious in embracing it ... after which manner we are required to *work out our salvation*." Accordingly, Robinson argues, a Christian should be "prepared to embrace any truth which to me remains unrevealed, after I have tried it by the touchstone of God's word."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, William Walwyn, in his 1645/46 pamphlet *Toleration Justified, and Persecution Condemned*, affirms that "the Word of God is the Touchstone" by which an opinion should be examined, and declares that "'tis excellency in any man or woman... to embrace or reject, whatsoever upon further search he finds agreeable to, or dissonant from God's holy Word."<sup>11</sup> John Goodwin, in his *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures Asserted* (1647), affirms that "the Scriptures are from heaven, and not from men,"

---

<sup>8</sup> Champion, "'Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures,'" 212.

<sup>9</sup> For Episcopius's theologically-rooted arguments for toleration, see Jonathan I. Israel, "Toleration in Seventeenth-Century Dutch and English Thought," in *The Exchange of Ideas: Religion, Scholarship and Art in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Simon Groenvelt and Michael Wintle (Zutphen, 1994), 17-19, 20-21.

<sup>10</sup> [Henry Robinson]. *Liberty of Conscience: or the sole means to obtaine Peace and Truth* (London, 1643/44), sig. a4, 37.

<sup>11</sup> In a 1648/49 work, Walwyn urges: "Study the Scriptures, that word of truth: blesse God for them, forsake them not for the vain traditions of men." William Walwyn, *The Writings of William Walwyn*, edited by J. R. McMichael and Barbara Taft (Athens, 1989), 158-59, 183, 323.

and argues that God offers the reward of true faith to “the thoughtful, studiously bent, and inquiring soul about the things of eternity,” not the negligent man who simply adheres to the teachings of his teachers.<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Taylor, in his *Liberty of Prophesying* (1647), reminds his readers of the imperative to ‘search the Scriptures,’ adding that someone who “resolves not to be careful whether he have truth or no ... hath an affection indifferent to truth or falsehood.” The only way we can safely accept a received doctrine is “by our industry in searching it, and examining the grounds upon which the propounders build their dictates.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Scripture and Reason**

But Scripture, however divinely inspired, was only a collection of words. It could not stand completely alone. Without another external authority to provide a single and orthodox interpretation, what was to stop the democratizing of Bible-interpretation from descending into chaos, especially if wildly heterodox interpreters claimed divine inspiration? For many of the English tolerationists of the 1640s, the solution lay in the claim that Scripture must be interpreted by the active use of human reason. Within English Protestantism, the most influential precedent for setting up human reason as the crucial and necessary guide for the proper reading of Scripture came from the late Elizabethan theologian Richard Hooker (1554-1600).

Richard Hooker has often been regarded in retrospect as a founder, even the ‘inventor,’ of ‘Anglicanism’ as a religious philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Hooker did, after all, insist upon outward conformity to the Church of England, and he advocated the corporal punishment of dissenters who refused to conform. He saw the Church of England as a ‘reformed continuation’ of the Church of Rome, not a radical break from it. His positive view of ceremonialism and church ritual was admired by the Laudian clergy of the 1630s, and his works had a significant influence on the

---

<sup>12</sup> John Goodwin, *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures Asserted* (London, 1647) sig. a3-a4, 376.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse of The Liberty of Prophesying* (London, 1647), 165.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), 227-28; Achsah Guibbory, *Christian Identity, Jews, and Israel in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2010), 261-63.

Restoration Anglicans of the 1660s.<sup>15</sup> This would appear to set Hooker completely at odds from anti-ceremonialist and nonconformist Puritans. Yet scholars are only beginning to appreciate the breadth of his influence in seventeenth-century English Protestantism. Nicholas McDowell's recent work has demonstrated Hooker's influence on the works of William Walwyn, an unmistakably heterodox thinker, as well as Richard Baxter, whose ecumenical Puritanism helped to make him a noted Restoration apologist for 'respectable nonconformity.'<sup>16</sup> Just as John Goodwin continued to rely on the works of John Calvin and William Perkins even as he increasingly came to disagree with strict predestination,<sup>17</sup> so too could non-conformists admire certain aspects of Hooker's thought without subscribing to his entire religious philosophy.

In his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Hooker went over a familiar theme: the 'wearisome labour' involved in searching for religious truth in the Bible. In his view, the Fall of Man into Sin had impaired the search for knowledge, but it had not halted it. It had made the search for knowledge "a thing painful." As a result, the human soul "preferreth rest in ignorance before wearisome labour to know." The necessary knowledge for salvation was to be found in Scripture, but Scripture could only be understood properly with the use of human reason. God had planted reason in every human soul specifically for this purpose. Peter Lake writes that for Hooker,

scripture was a message encoded in terms expressly designed for rational creatures. It presupposed the powers and autonomous action of human reason to decode its message. ... It was on this basis that Hooker was able to argue so forcefully for the complete complementarity and interdependence of reason and scripture, nature and grace.<sup>18</sup>

For Hooker, Scripture goes beyond reason, but cannot stand without it. The 'wearisome labour to know' requires diligence and the active use of reason in

---

<sup>15</sup> Gary Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (University Park, 1996) 140-41; Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 156-57, 164-69; Guibbory, *Christian Identity*, 63ff.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 2003), 84-85. On Baxter, see N.H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 37, 292.

<sup>18</sup> Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 150-52.



order to overcome humanity's natural intellectual laziness and to attain saving religious knowledge.

The *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* was written as an attack on Elizabethan Presbyterianism and Puritanism. When Hooker emphasized the importance of reason for reading the Bible, he did so in contrast to the conventional Calvinist reliance on 'the testimony of the Spirit,' which was noticeably absent from his biblical hermeneutic.<sup>19</sup> Hooker criticized Puritan exegesis for reading its own opinions into the Biblical text – an view similar to Taylor's in *The Liberty of Prophesying*. Debora K. Shuger suggests that "Hooker defends a hermeneutic based on reason and evidence in order to counter the Puritan claim that correct interpretation is a matter of divine inspiration."<sup>20</sup> To do this, Hooker must rely on the belief that God has planted reason in the soul of every human being, and that all are capable of using and obliged to use that reason, on some level, to understand Scripture. This is an aspect of Hooker's thought, I will suggest, that is taken up by later tolerationists.

Hooker, however, was not a tolerationist. Conceding that human reason is fallible and can lead to error, Hooker re-asserted the importance of ecclesiastical authority. As Shuger puts it, Hooker's view was that "in th[e] absence of certainty, probable reasoning must yield 'general obedience' to authority and to tradition." An appeal to the authority of the church was necessary to stabilize the "rhetorical arena of competing probabilities" that results from the simple application of reason to Scripture.<sup>21</sup> Like the Catholic fideists discussed in the previous chapter, Hooker argued that 'general obedience' to authority was the only way to resolve the uncertainty that resolved from theological disputes where both sides could show 'reason' for their side. This call for 'general obedience' in light of uncertainty would continue to appeal to Restoration Anglicans, but would

---

<sup>19</sup> Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 145-47, 154, 225-26. Hooker's rationalist Biblical hermeneutic certainly owes a debt to Aristotle, Aquinas and the scholastic tradition. Yet as Lake points out, we cannot say that Hooker's position simply resulted from studying Aristotle and Aquinas, since scholastic argumentation was very common among sixteenth-century English divines, including several of Hooker's strictly Calvinist 'moderate Puritan' opponents.

<sup>20</sup> Debora K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1990) 27; Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 34-35, 37.

be completely antithetical to the opinions of the tolerationists of the 1640s and beyond.

William Chillingworth, in *The Religion of Protestants* (1637/38), takes exception to the attempts of the Jesuit Edward Knott to use Hooker's arguments concerning 'general obedience' against Protestantism. Yet while he attempts to defend Hooker from Jesuit appropriation, Chillingworth also argues that Hooker, by demanding obedience to the Church's authority, would have condemned Martin Luther as a schismatic. Both Hooker and the Jesuit fall into 'labyrinths,' Chillingworth says, when they insist that "it is not lawful for any man to oppose his judgement, or leave her Communion, though he have evidence of Scripture" that the Church is in error. Against both Hooker and Knott (and Archbishop Laud?), Chillingworth asks whether they would "have such a man dissemble against his conscience, or externally deny a truth, known to be contained in holy Scripture?"<sup>22</sup>

As Christopher Hill has observed, Chillingworth "elevate[s] the Bible above all human authority, but the Bible [has] to be interpreted by human reason."<sup>23</sup> Stressing the secondary nature of catechisms and doctrines, Chillingworth declares that "The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only is the religion of Protestants!" Scripture is the only truly sturdy foundation upon which to build one's faith. "I am fully assured," he writes, "that God does not, and therefore men ought not to require any more of any man but this, To believe the Scripture to be Gods word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it." As I noted in the previous chapter, Chillingworth concedes the imperfection of human understanding, but he insists that men can fall into error and still be saved on account of their 'endeavour,' as long as they are "men of honest and upright hearts, true lovers of God and truth."<sup>24</sup> The saving power of Christian truth is found not only in the words of Scripture, but also in the human efforts to find it there. Grace, ideally, should not be forced onto otherwise unworthy Christians. It

---

<sup>22</sup> William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation* (Oxford, 1638), 64-65, 249, 309-312.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Hill. *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-century Revolution* (London, 1993), 227.

should be granted to those who are willing to work hard for it. God is more likely to respond to our industrious search for his truth, and less likely to simply force an irresistible grace onto those who are unworthy. As Chillingworth writes in an unpublished manuscript, “to have a faith raised, confirmed and settled in me, by a super-natural agent is no work at all of mine, and therefore I can deserve no thanks for it: so that consequently there can be less merit or obedience of spirit in him, who believes by divine grace ... than in him who believes by a firm and rational faith, by less assistance or none at all.”<sup>25</sup>

In their endeavours to seek out God’s truth, Chillingworth writes, men and women are to be guided by the active use of their ‘private reason.’ Any arguments drawn from Scripture, he insists, “cannot convince mee, unlesse I judge them by my Reason.” In choosing their religion and interpreting Scripture, men and women should “make use of their Reason ... which yet, without all question, none but unreasonable men can deny, to haue been the chieftest ende why Reason was given them.”<sup>26</sup> Like Hooker, Chillingworth suggests that God has implanted Reason in the human soul so that we might properly understand the meaning of Scripture and the nature of faith. Like Hooker, Chillingworth thinks that Scripture is above reason, but cannot stand without it. The Church of Rome, he claims, asks men to believe things which are demonstrably against reason. But “following the Scripture,” he writes, “I shall believe ... many things above reason, but nothing against it.”<sup>27</sup>

This argument for “the use of human reason generally in matters of faith” is what Hugh Trevor-Roper has affectionately described as Socinianism “in the wide sense.” Trevor-Roper assembles a pantheon of the so-called ‘wide Socinian’ tradition, which includes Erasmus, Castellio, George Cassander, Socinus, Philippe de Mornay, Grotius, Jacobus Acontius, Hooker, as well as the men of Great Tew: Chillingworth, Falkland, and Clarendon. He names Acontius, Hooker and especially Grotius as the thinkers who had the greatest influence on the Great Tew

---

<sup>24</sup> Chillingworth, *Religion of Protestants*, 41, 221, 375-76.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in R. R. Orr, *Reason and Authority: The thought of William Chillingworth*, (Oxford, 1967), 163.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 98-99.

men.<sup>28</sup> Trevor-Roper's rationalist pantheon, however, is only interested in the 'liberal Anglican' tradition. He neglects to mention, for example, John Goodwin's 1648 collaboration with the irenicists John Dury and Samuel Hartlib to produce the first published English translation of Acontius' ecumenical work *Stratagematum Satanae* (1565), for which Goodwin wrote an introductory epistle.<sup>29</sup> In the broad historical view, then, it would be a mistake to simply draw a line connecting 'tolerant' and 'rationalist' high-churchmen, running from Hooker and Chillingworth to Restoration latitudinarians like John Tillotson and Edward Fowler, while thinking of the nonconformist tolerationists of the Civil War period as something else entirely.

John Goodwin, it is worth remembering, was a university-trained theologian. During his time at Cambridge, the curriculum there remained fundamentally scholastic and Aristotelian. In his biography of Goodwin, John Coffey concludes that Goodwin's use of scholastic philosophy was "thoroughly conventional," and that he never displayed any interest in Descartes or in any other shocking new philosophy. Like the men of Great Tew, Goodwin admired Acontius and Grotius. As he increasingly inclined toward Arminian ideas in the 1640s, Goodwin developed a theology of atonement which drew heavily on Grotius. Coffey argues that Goodwin's strong distaste for the Laudian clergy would have dissuaded him from borrowing from the English Arminians.<sup>30</sup> However, even if Goodwin's anti-Laudianism extended to Chillingworth, it is nonetheless clear that these two men shared a fondness for similar writers and

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 377.

<sup>28</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Great Tew Circle," in *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth-century Essays* (Chicago, 1987), 188-192. Trevor-Roper distinguishes this 'wide sense' of Socinianism from the 'strict sense,' which is "the application of that reason to dissolve the doctrine of the Trinity."

<sup>29</sup> Jacobus Acontius, *Satan's Stratagems, or the Devils Cabinet-Council Discovered* (London, 1648). The Great Tew and Hartlib Circles were connected through Katherine Jones, the Viscountess Ranelagh, who was an ecumenical Protestant, Robert Boyle's sister, the niece of John Dury's wife, and a close friend of John Milton since the mid-1640s. On Ranelagh, see Ruth Connolly, "'A Wise and Godly Sybilla': Viscountess Ranelagh and the Politics of International Protestantism" in *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Sylvia Brown (Leiden, 2007), 285-306.

<sup>30</sup> Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 18-19, 34, 73-74, 211, 274.

strains of Protestant thought.<sup>31</sup>

Ellen More has argued that Goodwin's arguments for toleration drew principally on Acontius and on a rationalist approach to theology. "The heart of Goodwin's argument for toleration," she concludes, "was that Scripture must be read by the light of reason. ... He maintained reason was an indispensable, not merely a useful, exegetical tool." She also notes the similarity to Chillingworth's *The Religion of Protestants*.<sup>32</sup> This is expressed most clearly in Goodwin's controversial work *Hagiomastix*, where Goodwin affirms that it is "sound Divinity" to say that "Reason ought to be every man's leader, Guide, and Director in his Faith, or about what he is, or ought to believe: and that no man ought *to leap* with his Faith, till he hath *looked* with his Reason." Christians should not be required to follow the decisions of Synods, Councils, or other ecclesiastical authorities, unless they have sufficient Reason to believe that these decisions are grounded in Scripture. Goodwin suggests that people should "look narrowly upon every thing with the eye of Reason, before they receive it by the hand of Faith." The Presbyterians, he argues, expect men to follow their decisions without considering them, and thus "injoine their Proselytes upon paine of death to cast their Reason out of their Religion."<sup>33</sup> For Goodwin, therefore, the active use of reason is central to the process of building a true Christian faith.

Goodwin's *Hagiomastix* was published in 1646, the year which marked the high point of his congregation's collaboration with the emerging Leveller movement, including William Walwyn. In May of that year, Goodwin's followers contributed money toward the publication of Walwyn's pamphlet *A Word in*

---

<sup>31</sup> They also shared the same principal objection to the doctrine of strict predestination, concerned primarily with its effects on moral conduct. Both argued that it fostered presumption in some men and despair in others, and in neither case contributed to pious living. See Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 79, and Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 209.

<sup>32</sup> More, "John Goodwin," 57-59.

<sup>33</sup> John Goodwin, *Hagiomastix, or the scourge of the Saints* (London, 1646), 19, 108. Like Chillingworth, this position left Goodwin vulnerable to charges of Socinianism, an accusation he had already faced as early as 1641. In the 1650s, Goodwin actively preached and wrote against Socinianism, and even put his name on a petition drawn up by Independent clergy, particularly John Owen, which offered toleration to Baptists and Arminians but aimed to crack down on Socinianism. As Coffey points out, in the 1650s Goodwin appears almost conservative in his consistent condemnations of Socinians, Seekers, Quakers, Antinomians and Anabaptists. See Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 68-69, 223, 246-47, 251-53.

*Season*, in which Walwyn advises the Long Parliament that “you are to know, that [the people] are absolutely Free to follow the dictate of their own Understandings and Consciences, informed by the Word of God, by principles of right reason, and all other good meanes.” Only a few months earlier, in his anonymously published *Toleration Justified* (Jan. 1645/46), after affirming that all opinions are to be judged only by the ‘Touchstone’ of the Word of God, Walwyn argues that only “sound reason and argument” can correct error. Therefore, there should be no limit to toleration beyond the maintenance of public safety, because “the more horrid and blasphemous the opinion is, the easier suppress, by reason and argument.”<sup>34</sup> Walwyn, therefore, also claims that the use of ‘reason,’ alongside Scripture, is necessary for an individual to build a Christian faith.

In his *Just Defense* (1649), Walwyn reveals that although he cannot read any Latin, he has read a number of English works of divinity, including Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.<sup>35</sup> Nicholas McDowell finds this particularly noteworthy, and suggests that

the attraction of the thought of Richard Hooker, immensely learned defender of the traditions and authority of the Elizabethan Church of England and one of the most influential critics of separatism and sectarianism in the early modern period, to Walwyn, Leveller leader, tolerationist, and opponent of any form of compulsory national Church, might seem unexpected. Yet the appeal no doubt lay in Hooker’s sense of man and the universe as governed by reason ... in Hooker’s Aristotelian emphasis on the natural rationality of men against the Calvinist emphasis on their innate depravity; in his rejection of Puritan biblical fundamentalism in favour of arguments from natural reason and natural law which would complement those from Scripture, and in his notion of an inclusive (though State) Church in which opposing parties can live together in good conscience.<sup>36</sup>

McDowell concludes that “Walwyn’s reading is a warning against underestimating the intellectual resources of ‘popular’ radicalism in the English revolution.”<sup>37</sup> I would add that it also warns against underestimating the

---

<sup>34</sup> More, “John Goodwin,” 64; Walwyn, *WWW*, 164, 202.

<sup>35</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 397.

<sup>36</sup> McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination*, 83.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

connections and similarities between ‘high-church’ and nonconformist arguments for toleration in this period. Just as the Independent John Goodwin, apologist for the regicide of 1649, was a Cambridge-educated scholastic thinker who admired many of the same writers as William Chillingworth, so too was William Walwyn, the radical Leveller tolerationist, a close reader of Richard Hooker, the ‘founder of Anglicanism.’ It is not always so easy to distinguish dissenters from high-churchmen with respect to how they understood the true nature of Christian faith. Not all of the Puritans of the 1640s fit the stereotype of a strict and intolerant Calvinism, just as not all high-churchmen of the 1630s fit the stereotype of a repressive and theocratic Laudianism. Yet personal and political allegiances, as always, are capable of obscuring these connections. Whereas Goodwin, like Milton, publicly defended the regicide in 1649, Chillingworth was William Laud’s godson, and Jeremy Taylor served as chaplain to both the Archbishop and to Charles I.<sup>38</sup>

Taylor’s *The Liberty of Prophesying* is thoroughly suffused with the language of ‘reasonableness’ and ‘unreasonableness.’ While he confesses that individual reason can provide no certainty, he privileges it as Chillingworth and Goodwin do, and does not follow Hooker in commanding obedience despite one’s own objections. “Scripture, Tradition, Councils, and Fathers, are the evidence in a question,” Taylor declares, “but Reason is the judge.” In matters of faith, he says, we should indeed follow human guides, but only so far as our own reason allows. “Every man is bound to follow his guide,” he writes, “unless he believes his guide to mislead him; yet when he sees reason against his guide, it is best to follow his reason.” To be persuaded of a truth, one must be persuaded reasonably, not through the use of force.<sup>39</sup>

Thus Taylor, like Chillingworth, Goodwin and Walwyn, argues that individual reason must be allowed to have the final say in matters of faith and Scriptural interpretation. Henry Robinson’s *Liberty of Conscience* (1643/44) hints

---

<sup>38</sup> Trevor-Roper, “The Great Tew Circle,” 207-8; F. L. Huntley, *Jeremy Taylor and the Great Rebellion: A Study of His Mind and Temper in Controversy*. (Ann Arbor, 1970), 11; John Goodwin, *Hybristodikai. The obstructours of justice. Or a defence of the honourable sentence passed upon the late King, by the High Court of Justice* (London, 1649).

at a similar view, but is less precise. He is more interested in the centrality of Scripture and individual conscience, and less interested in explaining the value of 'reason.' He does argue that non-Christians should not be compelled to embrace Christianity until "their reasons and understandings were convinced in the truth thereof." Religious compulsion, he adds, will only harden the hearts of unbelievers and make it more difficult to persuade them with "arguments as are alledged from reason or from Scripture."<sup>40</sup> The case of John Milton, however, is more complex regarding reason. In *Of Civil Power* (1659), Milton argues that some aspects of religion can be comprehended by human reason, while other parts of religion lie beyond it.<sup>41</sup> On the one hand, he insists that the only external ground for religion is Scripture, and the only internal ground is the 'divine illumination' of the Holy Spirit – not the use of reason. On the other hand, the preface to his unpublished *Christian Doctrine* advises the reader to "withhold his consent from those opinions about which he does not feel fully convinced, until the evidence of the Bible convinces him and induces his reason to assent and to believe"<sup>42</sup> – closer to the view of Chillingworth, Goodwin or Robinson. In short, Milton insists that each Christian ought to use critical reason when evaluating arguments regarding doctrine or worship, but that the Bible itself, being above reason, ought to be read with the interpretive power of the supra-rational Holy Spirit.

Hermeneutic complexities aside, Robinson and Milton do agree with Chillingworth, Goodwin, Walwyn and Taylor on an important point: a reasoned argument from Scripture is the only effective way to persuade someone of a religious truth. This is an absolutely central point which deserves emphasis, because it is a fundamental part of each of these arguments for toleration. Each of

---

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 163, 170.

<sup>40</sup> [Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience*, 14, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Milton, *Of Civil Power*, 3-4. "It will require no great labor of exposition to unfold what is here meant by matters of religion; being as soon apprehended as defin'd, as belong chiefly to the knowledge and service of God: and are either above the reach and light of nature without revelation from above, and therefore liable to be variously understood by humane reason, or such things as are enjoind or forbidden by divine precept, which els by the light of reason would seem indifferent to be don or not don; and so likewise must needs appeer to everie man as the precept is understood."

<sup>42</sup> Milton, *Of Civil Power*, 5-6; idem, *CPW.VI*, 121-22.



these authors insists, to varying degrees, that toleration does not mean approbation, and that it is the duty of a good Christian to continue to persuade the erroneous using ‘spiritual weapons.’ Goodwin, for example, maintains in a 1644 tolerationist work that “it is the expresse order and command of God to Ministers of the Gospel ... by way of office and dutie to instruct and convince gainsayers, and men contrary-minded to the truth,” but to do so with ‘meeknesse,’ not to threaten them with force, and not to ‘incite the Civill Magistrate against them.”<sup>43</sup>

Walwyn, similarly, repeatedly affirms the Christian duty to persuade the erroneous of truth using arguments and exhortations, but never to punish them corporally, noting that the Apostles used only “the sword of the Spirit and soundnesse of argument” in spreading the true Gospel.<sup>44</sup> Taylor is also particularly emphatic on this point, arguing that

Although we must contend earnestly for the faith ... this contention must be with arms fit for the Christian warfare, the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of Faith, and preparation of the Gospel of peace instead of shooes, and a helmet of salvation, but not with other armes ... for the weapons of our warfare are not carnall but spirituall, and the persons that use them ought to be gentle, and easy to be intreated.<sup>45</sup>

Robinson, writing in 1644 against one of William Prynne’s polemics, remarks that it is easy to denounce erroneous opinions, but claims that “one dram of apposite Scripture, and rectified reason would convince men of their errors far sooner than the clubs & slaves which were and are still employed against our Saviour and his Saints.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Honest Error and Hypocrisy**

If, however, someone cannot be convinced by these reasoned arguments from Scripture, they must be allowed to follow the ‘dictates’ of their conscience.

---

<sup>43</sup> [John Goodwin], *M.S. to A.S. With a Plea for Libertie of Conscience in a Church Way* (London, 1644), 53-55. Goodwin backed up his words with actions. In 1649-50, he argued against strict predestinarianism in three public theological disputations with other Independent ministers including Vavasor Powell, John Simpson, and Henry Jessey. See Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 205-209.

<sup>44</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 118, 178, 240.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, viii. See also pp. xxviii, 199, 210.

<sup>46</sup> [Henry Robinson], *An Answer to Mr. William Prynne’s Twelve Questions* (London, 1644), 18-19.

The notion that the ‘conscience’ speaks in a dictatorial voice, I think, is telling. These arguments for toleration frequently describe a good Christian as one who is ‘conscientious,’ and whose individual ‘conscience’ is completely binding and must therefore be inviolable. This is expressed most clearly by Walwyn in *The Compassionate Samaritane* (1644), where he claims that a man does not choose his religious opinion. Conscience is, for Walwyn, the uncontrollable result of a person’s rational search for religious truth. “Whatsoever a mans reason doth conclude to be true or false,” Walwyn writes, “to be agreeable or disagreeable to Gods word, ... [that] man is by his own reason necessitated to be of that mind.”<sup>47</sup>

Like Walwyn, Robinson condemns the notion that “a conscientious Christian should be put to death for doing nothing but what he is bound in conscience.”<sup>48</sup> Goodwin, also, sees no grounds for punishing anyone who thinks that he holds a religious truth, if that man believes that he is “bound in conscience” to hold, and even to publish, that opinion.<sup>49</sup> A tolerable heterodox opinion, therefore, is not an act of the will; it is an involuntary conclusion reached after a sincere inquiry after truth. Taylor suggests a similar view, wondering who truly deserves to be called a ‘Schismatick.’ Is it “he that makes unnecessary and ... inconvenient impositions, or he that disobeyes them, because hee cannot without doing violence to his conscience believe them?” Real heresy, for Taylor, must be voluntary; “no man is a Heretick against his will,” he declares, adding that a man whose “error [is] not voluntary” cannot be punished as a heretic. For Taylor, the man who sincerely holds an erroneous opinion “may doe violence to truth, but never to his own conscience,” adding that “an honest error is better then an hypocriticall profession of truth.”<sup>50</sup>

The contrast between ‘honest error’ and hypocrisy is another crucial point in the tolerationist discourse of this period. If a ‘conscientious’ Christian cannot simply choose his conscience, but rather comes to it by ‘laboring constantly and seeking tirelessly after truth,’ through the active use of his reason and the diligent

---

<sup>47</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 103.

<sup>48</sup> [Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience*, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, 75.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 23-28, 163, 265.

study of Scripture, he is thus 'bound' to follow its 'dictates.' Therefore, any church which insists upon uniformity of belief or practice forces a Christian to 'do violence' to that conscience, and to become a hypocrite. This would reduce the Church of England to a haven for hypocrites. And if God loves this 'conscientious' Christian, then he must conversely also hate the hypocritical Christian, because hypocrisy is a sin. As noted above, this argument lay at the heart of Chillingworth's criticism of Richard Hooker, with whom he agreed on so many other points.

Goodwin is particularly clear in explaining that the good, 'conscientious' Christian cannot be a hypocrite. In a 1644 work, he argues that to compel one's conscience is to make him a hypocrite, and thus to condemn his soul to sin, because God hates a hypocritical conscience. These hypocrites, who can publicly affirm something that they do not believe to be true, "will hardly make good Christians themselves, or suffer others so to be." But Goodwin is even more explicit in *Hagiomastix* (1646), where he argues that "the sinne of *Sacrilegious dissimulation*; which the sinner cannot know but to be an abomination" is much worse than any sin that might result from contradicting the church when he has used "his best endeavours" and has determined that a particular doctrine is not true.<sup>51</sup> In short, for Goodwin, it is better to contradict a given doctrine than to dissimulate and be a hypocrite.

Taylor, as noted above, held that "that "an honest error is better then an hypocriticall profession of truth." For this reason, he argues, religious persecution does not encourage people to be good Christians, "for it either punishes a man for keeping a good conscience, or forces him into a bad; it either punishes sincerity, or perswades hypocrisie; ... it teaches a man to dissemble and to be safe, but never to be honest." He associates religious compulsion with the evils of the Spanish Inquisition, and notes that many of the 'New Christians' in Spain continue to dissemble and remain 'Secret Moores.'<sup>52</sup> Henry Robinson also uses the example of Iberian New Christians to demonstrate the futility of trying to

---

<sup>51</sup> [Goodwin], *M.S. to A.S.*, 45, 56, 60; idem, *Hagiomastix*, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 200.

compel people into religious conformity. He notes that the Portuguese Inquisition continues to persecute those dissemblers who remain ‘Jewes at heart’ despite their efforts to conform outwardly. Any English people forced into religious observance out of fear of punishment, Robinson claims, “could not possibly be good Protestants,” and must instead be either hypocrites or negligent Christians who cannot give a true account of their faith. This kind of worship, either hypocritical or negligent, is not what God will prefer at the Day of Judgement<sup>53</sup> Walwyn (1645/46) and Milton (1659) both agree that religious compulsion encourages hypocrisy and forces people to sin, because “whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.”<sup>54</sup>

This preoccupation with the dangers of ‘hypocritical’ religion was certainly not peculiar to tolerationist writers. The question of ‘outward conformity’ had been a divisive issue in the English church since at least the mid-sixteenth century, if not since the time of the Lollards. The Elizabethan Church settlement’s Act of Uniformity (1559) had made the failure to attend church illegal, but not the adherence to unorthodox opinions. The Queen herself had resisted the efforts of politicians and clergy to enact stiffer tests of theological orthodoxy. According to Alexandra Walsham, this meant that “bare bodily presence at public worship was deemed a sufficient guarantee of religious fidelity.” In theory, mandatory church attendance would gradually eliminate heterodox opinions through weekly indoctrination. In practice, however, this policy allowed ‘partial and occasional conformity’ to flourish during the eight decades between 1559 and 1640, helping to confirm and nourish cultural stereotypes like that of the ‘church papist.’<sup>55</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper reminds us that even Archbishop Laud favoured a measure of ‘toleration’ for inner conscience as long as people conformed outwardly.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the early modern Church of England

---

<sup>53</sup> [Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience*, 6-7, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 114, 178; Milton, *Of Civil Power*, 40, 67.

<sup>55</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), 59-60, 190-91, 206-7, 301. Walsham reminds us that a parish was a social unit as well as an ecclesiastical one, and that many who practiced a form of outward conformity likely did so because it was simply unthinkable to withdraw oneself from one’s community.

<sup>56</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Archbishop Laud in Retrospect,” in *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution* (Chicago, 1992), 140.

had a long tradition of condoning, even tacitly encouraging, ‘outward conformity’ for those who privately held dissenting opinions.

Therefore, when the advocates for liberty of conscience condemn religious ‘hypocrisy,’ they are in fact condemning a long-standing and relatively widespread practice in the Church of England. In condemning this tradition so strongly, they are following in the footsteps of what was, until 1643, a very small and marginal group of Baptist and separatist writers such as Thomas Helwys, Robert Murton or Henry Jacob (sometimes called a ‘semi-separatist’).<sup>57</sup> Such an ardent objection also recalls Walsham’s comments about the ‘theological assumptions’ of defiant dissenters who welcomed and sometimes even actively courted religious martyrdom. These would-be martyrs, Walsham writes, strongly believed “that every Christian had a solemn and binding duty to bear open witness to the truth. To conceal it out of cowardly fear was to commit the heinous sin of religious apostasy.”<sup>58</sup> Of course, the plea for liberty of conscience sought to bear witness to Christian truth in life, rather than in death. Nonetheless, a deeply felt sense of the individual Christian’s personal obligation to bear witness openly to truth, while associating the common practice of occasional conformity with sin and apostasy, informed the views of both tolerationists and defiant would-be martyrs. This is an observation to be kept in mind when discussing the liberal-sounding ‘individualistic’ and ‘rational’ inclinations of these writers, particularly when discussing zealous Puritans like Goodwin or Robinson.

### **‘Implicit Faith’ and the ‘Conscientious’ Man**

This also helps us to understand why the tolerationist writers frequently condemn not only ‘hypocrisy,’ but also indifference and ‘lukewarm’ or ‘formall’ religion, which they often described as having an ‘implicit faith’ in the doctrines of men. As John Coffey has pointed out, even the most radical arguments for toleration in this period rarely show any leniency toward atheism. “What they had

---

<sup>57</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, “The ‘Rise of Puritanism’ and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571-1719,” in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, edited by Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford, 1991), 23-24, 28-29.

<sup>58</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 165.

in mind,” he suggests, “was perhaps toleration of all religions but not of irreligion.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, denying the charge that he would tolerate religious indifference or atheism, Robinson insists “that it is the freedome of their owne conscience which they desire, not to be indifferently of any Religion, or prophanely of none at all, but that they might enjoy alwayes peaceably that Religion, which they have examined and found to be the true one.”<sup>60</sup> Walwyn claims that those who hold such ‘traditionall’ faith “are not truly religious, but meere morall Christians.” Goodwin accuses “the great bulk of the Kingdome” of being “lukewarme and formall professors” who rely on the state to spoon-feed a religion to them.<sup>61</sup>

Milton is also consistent in his attacks on ‘implicit faith’ as a lazy and ‘popish’ trait which is an affront to Protestantism. The most eloquent expression of this view comes from a famous passage in *Areopagitica* (1644):

Truth is compar'd in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, they sick'n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretick in the truth; and if he beleewe things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresie. There is not any burden that som would gladlier post off to another, then the charge and care of their Religion. There be, who knows not that there be of Protestants and professors who live and dye in as arrant an implicit faith, as any lay Papist of Loretto. A wealthy man addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds Religion to be a traffick so entangl'd, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade . . . What does he therefore, but resolv's to give over toyling, and to find himself out som factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> John Coffey, “Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution,” *The Historical Journal* 41.4 (1998), 976. Coffey adds, however, that the moralism of the puritan tolerationists would almost certainly have excluded many religions from toleration.

<sup>60</sup> [Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience*, sig. a4.

<sup>61</sup> Goodwin, *Sion-Colledg visited. Or, some briefe Animadversions upon a Pamphlet lately published* (London, 1647/8), 5; Walwyn, *WWW*, 265-66.

<sup>62</sup> John Milton. *Areopagitica: a speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* (London, 1644), 26-27. See also idem, *Of Civil Power*, 7, 35-36; and idem, *Of True Religion*, 12-14.

For Robinson, Goodwin, Milton and Walwyn, religious conformists are often negligent, indifferent, intellectually lazy men who do not possess the individual 'zeale to truth' that God's worship requires. Taylor is much quieter on the subject of religious indifference. He does suggest that the man who follows his own reason has great advantages over the one who "gives himself wholly to follow any humane guide whatsoever."<sup>63</sup> But he has no interest in condemning implicit faith in the authority of the Church, which is not surprising, given his own Laudian background.

These arguments were designed to refute the common charge that religious toleration would condone and encourage religious indifference and atheism. They were meant to prove that those who truly needed liberty of conscience were anything but lukewarm. 'Conscientious' Christians required toleration, the argument went, precisely because they were not intellectual lazy and lukewarm. The above passage from *Areopagitica* is similar to Richard Hooker's view of fallen man's natural intellectual laziness and 'the wearisome labour to know,' but Milton has taken Hooker's position to a more individualistic extreme. Truly conscientious Christians require the liberty to properly undertake this laborious process, and to believe and worship that which is prescribed by their conscience. This is why Walwyn declares that "a conscientious man" is "of all men ... the most precious in the sight of God," and that no amount of worldly comforts can prevent his 'extreme sorrow' without 'liberty of worshipping God according to his Conscience.'" Goodwin, similarly, affirms that for those "men who are truly conscientious", all other liberties are worth little when there is no liberty of conscience.<sup>64</sup>

The 'conscientious man' is frequently described by these authors as the man who makes religious toleration necessary. This is the Christian who reads Scripture diligently, interprets it rationally, and develops an individual faith based completely on his 'conscience,' the sincere product of his best and ongoing efforts, because he knows that salvation is the highest good one can attain. This

---

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 165.

<sup>64</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 192; [Goodwin], *M.S. to A.S.*, 90 (numbered 82).

individual obligation to search for truth comes directly from God, and any man who neglects this duty puts his salvation at risk.<sup>65</sup> An argument for toleration founded upon liberty of conscience, therefore, comes from a particular understanding of Protestantism which is not so much doctrinal, but methodological. It privileges the process of faith, rather than the finer points of doctrine. The argument for religious toleration does not make sense without this particular understanding of what the Protestant religion is about and how it works.

### **Distinguishing the Tolerable from the Intolerable**

In an important sense, however, this methodological understanding of Christianity as process, rather than as doctrine, does not simply commit these writers to some pure, essential ‘tolerationism.’ As John Coffey writes, “Every society has a theory of toleration; societies simply differ over what is tolerable.”<sup>66</sup> I would suggest that this understanding of Protestantism-as-process – individual, rational, Scriptural – allows these toleration authors to re-shape the contours of what should be considered ‘true religion,’ and therefore, to draw new boundaries between the tolerable and the intolerable. If the ‘conscientious man’ is the answer to one question – who is toleration for – then, conversely, there must be an answer to the corresponding question: who is toleration *not* for?

If the conscientious man builds his faith upon reasoned arguments from Scripture, then any tolerable religious opinion or practice should be both ‘reasonable’ and derived from Scripture. This is the view of Chillingworth, who holds that men should only be considered damned when they believe something which is both patently opposed to Scripture and without any probable reason.<sup>67</sup> Taylor insists that the purpose of his work is “to dissuade from tyranny, not to encourage licentiousness,” and he observes in a later work that it is unsafe both

---

<sup>65</sup> W. K. Jordan puts it well: “The individual man, then, lies under the grave responsibility of searching throughout his life for truth, a responsibility which he cannot possibly discharge unless his mind and body are freed from all compulsion and restraint.” See Jordan, *Men of Substance: a Study of the Thought of Two English Revolutionaries, Henry Parker and Henry Robinson* (Chicago, 1942), 95, 97.

<sup>66</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow, 2000), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Chillingworth, *Religion of Protestants*, 41.



to grant absolute liberty in reading Scripture and to deny that liberty.<sup>68</sup> Goodwin, whose views make him a frequent target of religious conservatives in the 1640s, begins to look “decidedly respectable” in the 1650s as he preaches and writes against Quakers, Antinomians, Anabaptists, and other new sectaries which rejected orthodox Protestant Biblicism in favour of personally inspired revelation.<sup>69</sup> Walwyn, after bemoaning the ‘traditionall’ religion of most English Protestants, also criticizes those who react too strongly to tradition, and fall into absurd opinions. These people have become “startled in their consciences,” he says, and “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.” In another work, Walwyn attacks those who claim divine inspiration, reject the divine authority of the Scriptures, or simply “make them speak according to the spirit of their own Imaginations.” He urges these people to “study the Scriptures” and not to abandon the Word of God for the notions and traditions of men.<sup>70</sup>

The view that close adherence to Scripture was the orthodox Protestant antidote to ‘enthusiasm’ was not new. Luther and Bullinger had argued something similar in their conflicts with the Anabaptist ‘enthusiasts’ of the sixteenth century. In fact, Walwyn’s condemnation of enthusiasm sounds remarkably like that of his contemporary Friedrich Spanheim, the orthodox Calvinist theologian at Leiden, whose 1646 polemic against Anabaptists was also published in English that year as *Englands Warning by Germanies Woe*. According to Spanheim, “Enthusiasts are those, which boasted above the rest, of *divine inspirations, extasies, and secret communication with God*, obtruding their Prophetesies for the word of God, and preferring them before the written Word; yea, contended, that that was to be judged by their dreams.”<sup>71</sup> Both Spanheim and Walwyn condemn personal inspiration, and assert the orthodoxy of Biblicism.

Yet perhaps what is most unusual about Goodwin, Walwyn and Taylor is their insistence that heterodox Christians can, in fact, be rational men and diligent

---

<sup>68</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, xiv; Huntley, *Jeremy Taylor*, 36.

<sup>69</sup> Coffey, *John Goodwin*, 248-253.

<sup>70</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 267-68, 317, 321, 323.

readers of Scripture. Granting that there are some hot-tempered men among the 'sects,' Taylor nonetheless affirms that generally "they are men that speak and make syllogismes, and use reason, and read Scripture." Walwyn insists that separatists and Anabaptists are not "a rash heady people" who follow 'Enthusiasms,' but are rather "rational examiners of those things they hold for truth." Goodwin, in defending Antitrinitarians, concedes that the doctrine of the Trinity is incomprehensible to human reason and has no incontrovertible evidence in Scripture.<sup>72</sup> The test for the tolerability of heterodox doctrines – conformity to the word of Scripture – remains the same, but the toleration authors argue that at least some of the supposed heretics have actually passed the test. The accompanying argument that tolerably heterodox Christians are actually 'rational' thinkers answers the charge that these men base their religion upon 'extasies.' It also refutes the enduring mediaeval stereotype, employed by Presbyterian heresiographers such as Thomas Edwards in his *Gangraena* (1646), that heretics were illiterate and ignorant 'mechanick preachers.'<sup>73</sup>

Another common convention was to condemn heretics as socially unacceptable on account of their immoral and disruptive behaviour. In fifteenth-century England, the Lollards had been frequently associated with conspiracy and political insurrection.<sup>74</sup> In the sixteenth century, continental reformers like Bullinger frequently associated the 'enthusiasts' with "patently immoral acts," which were inspired not by God but by the Devil, and argued that they were a threat to the moral fabric of society. Bullinger, following Luther, also accused enthusiasts of being politically and social dangerous rebellious spirits who sowed discord and threatened to create anarchy in both church and state. These charges were echoed in the 1640s in by Spanheim, Edwards and others in their condemnations of Anabaptists and other heretics.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Michael Heyd, *'Be Sober and Reasonable': The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995), 11, 17, 19-20.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, x; Walwyn, *WWW*, 103; Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, 28, 35, 109.

<sup>73</sup> McDowell, *The Radical English Imagination*, 31-37.

<sup>74</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 47-48.

<sup>75</sup> Heyd, *'Be Sober and Reasonable'*, 18, 38-41.

Yet the toleration authors of the 1640s argue that toleration should be granted to heterodox believers precisely because they are pious Christians with a sound moral character who pose no threat to the state. Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* is the clearest example of this. As Nicholas McDowell has argued, Taylor's argument for liberty of conscience specifically re-defines Christian belief "in terms of ethics rather than theology."<sup>76</sup> Taylor frequently insists that those who live an "ill life" or are "destructive to humane society" should not be granted toleration. He maintains that "a Holy Life will make our belief holy" and argues that errors only become sinful when they lead to ill life or are linked with political subversion. Therefore, he is willing to tolerate the beliefs and worship of both Anabaptists and Roman Catholics, as long as they live morally upright lives and do not teach sedition. And if a Catholic or dissenter is to be punished for his rebellious teachings, Taylor emphasizes that "it is not for his opinion but his disobedience that he is punish'd," because "it is no good religion that teaches Doctrine whose consequents will destroy all Government."<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, Goodwin argues that other religions and sects should be tolerated only if they are "otherwise peaceable in the state, and every waies subject to the Laws." In *Hagiomastix*, he affirms that there are Antitrinitarians who are "of exemplary life, fruitfull in good workes, holy, heavenly, Christian in all their Conversation," and asks whether "such men as these, hold not the *foundations of Christian Religion*?"<sup>78</sup> Milton maintains that there are many holy and upright men among the sects, and for all of his criticism of Roman Catholics for their 'implicit faith,' nonetheless concludes in 1659 that "if they ought not to be tolerated, it is for just reason of state more then of religion."<sup>79</sup> Walwyn argues that the Anabaptists are no threat to civil society, and asserts that they are zealous defenders of good order who object only to tyrannical government. Responding to

---

<sup>76</sup> McDowell, "The Ghost in the Marble," 179.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, xi, 4-5, 188, 212, 246-47, 253-255.

<sup>78</sup> [Goodwin], *M.S. to A.S.*, 53-54; idem, *Hagiomastix*, 36.

<sup>79</sup> Milton, *Of True Religion*, 7-8; idem, *Of Civil Power*, 35-36. However, Milton revises this position in *Of* 1673, declaring that the Roman Catholic religion cannot be tolerated, in public or in private, even "supposing their State activities not to be dangerous," because "we have no warrant to regard Conscience which is not grounded on Scripture." See *Of True Religion*, 11-13. This pamphlet, it should be noted, was written during a period of heightened fear of 'Popery.'

the concern that toleration of heterodoxy will lead to an increase in immorality, Walwyn suggests that “the strictnesse and severity of law” should “be multiplied tenfold against all manner of vice and enormity,” and that public speakers should spend less time engaging in controversies and more time condemning vice and promoting “vertue and true piety.”<sup>80</sup> In short, heresiographers argued that immorality and civil disobedience were endemic to religious dissent, while the toleration authors made the optimistic claim that the majority of the heterodox, if granted toleration, would remain peaceful and morally upright.

While Civil War tolerationists like Taylor, Goodwin and Walwyn rejected uniform belief or worship, they did seek religious unity in other ways which privileged the process rather than the substance of faith. They had little interest in policing what one believed, but they were firmly committed to restricting the way in which one came to believe it. They maintained that all heterodoxy should conform to Scripture, reason, morality, piety, and the maintenance of civil order, because these were essential parts of the Christian religion. As we have seen, however, these same criteria were equally invoked by their opponents. Tolerationists and heresiographers disagreed over whether or not heterodox groups such as Anabaptists, Catholics, Antitrinitarians, separatists or others could be counted ‘rational,’ ‘moral,’ ‘pious’ or ‘peaceable.’ This was an argument that would be rehearsed many times over in the Restoration period, as dissenters such as Richard Baxter consistently tried to defend the ‘reasonableness’ of nonconformity against latitudinarians who claimed that Anglicanism held the monopoly on ‘reason.’<sup>81</sup> Perhaps the decisive point for the Civil War tolerationists, therefore, was that a good Christian must be ‘conscientious,’ and that the sincere process of forming one’s ‘conscience,’ along with the socially acceptable expression of it, mattered more than the content of that conscience. This distinguishes them from Presbyterians like Samuel Rutherford, who argued that only ‘rightly informed conscience’ could be permitted to have liberty, or

---

<sup>80</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 120-22, 239.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Ashcraft, “Latitudinarianism and toleration: historical myth versus political history,” in *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin (Cambridge, 1992), 155-162.

Independents like John Cotton, who maintained that an obstinate heretic “is not persecuted for cause of conscience, but for sinning against his own conscience .”<sup>82</sup>

### **Separatist toleration: Roger Williams**

There is, however, a noteworthy tolerationist of the 1640s who has been left out of this story, even though he may in fact have been the one willing to grant the widest range of toleration. Roger Williams’s *The bloody tenent of persecution* (1644) was published in the same year as works by Milton, Goodwin, and Robinson which I have already discussed in this chapter. But although Williams’s work does share some similarities with the other works I have discussed, the structure and tone of his argument for toleration are both fundamentally different. Unlike Taylor, Goodwin, or even Walwyn, Williams’s book bears little similarity to the contemporary irenicist pleas for Protestant unity or for a comprehensive English church. Its ecclesiology is distinctly separatist, not ecumenical, and its theology is distinctly Calvinist and predestinarian. There is no attempt to redefine the Christian religion according to Scripture, reason and morality. Williams is also no armchair tolerationist – his work is directly informed by his own experience managing the newly-formed Rhode Island colony.

Certainly, in several respects, Williams was not an isolated figure with no similarities to other tolerationists. He knew John Milton, apparently giving him lessons in Dutch, and he cites John Goodwin approvingly in *The bloody tenent*.<sup>83</sup> Like Robinson, he repudiates the entire idea of a national church.<sup>84</sup> Like Goodwin, he invokes the parable of the wheat and the tares, and advocates leaving the punishment of unworthy men to God. Also like Goodwin, he argues that all magistrates have the same power, and to grant the Christian magistrate the power to compel the conscience is to grant the same power to non-Christian

---

<sup>82</sup> Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 34; John Cotton, “The answer of Mr. Iohn Cotton of Boston” in Roger Williams, *The bloody tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (London, 1644), 8.

<sup>83</sup> Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton : life, work, and thought* (Oxford, 2008), 247; Roger Williams, *The bloody tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (London, 1644), 82.

<sup>84</sup> [Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience*, 27-28; Williams, *The bloody tenent*, 183-185.

magistrates.<sup>85</sup> Like Walwyn, he argues that persecution can confirm people in their error, but cannot correct them.<sup>86</sup> Like all of these writers, he claims that religious compulsion may make “a whole nation of hypocrites,” but cannot save souls. He also refuses toleration to those who violate civil laws and disturb the peace. He upholds the absolutely primacy of individual conscience in judging religious doctrines. Christian subjects “are bound to try to examine [the magistrate’s] commands,” he writes, “and satisfie their own reason, conscience, and judgement before the Lord.” They should count it a sin to follow a command if they are not “perswaded in their owne soule and conscience” that the command is according to God. He recommends the use of “spiritual artillery,” rather than bodily compulsion, to save souls. Why let people have access to the Bible and let them search the Scriptures, he asks, only to force them “to beleeve as the church beleeves?”<sup>87</sup> From these examples, it appears as though Williams belongs in the same conversation as the other toleration writers in this chapter.

Yet one only has to read *The bloody tenent* to recognize that there is something very different about Williams’s argument for toleration. First, he immediately jumps to the margins, promoting toleration for “Paganish, Iewish, Turkish or Antichristian consciences” in the book’s introduction.<sup>88</sup> Second, the language of his tract is absolutely filled with explicit sexual imagery, especially in describing the forcing of conscience as a kind of soul-rape. Third, Williams repeatedly insists that the possession of true religion has absolutely no bearing on a person’s ability to be a good, obedient civil subject, or to create a prosperous society.<sup>89</sup> Fourth, he is unequivocal in maintaining that people who are not true Christians are ‘evil’ and ‘vile.’ There is no description of God’s mercy for those who have fallen accidentally into error, but there is an obligation to simply “bear with them that are evil.”<sup>90</sup> Fifth, there is a series of graphic images describing God’s just wrath and the eternal torment which awaits those evildoers at the Last

---

<sup>85</sup> Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, 46-51, 88-94; Williams, *The bloody tenent*, 42-49, 108.

<sup>86</sup> Walwyn, *WWW*, 164; Williams, *The bloody tenent*, 152.

<sup>87</sup> Williams, *The bloody tenent*, sig. b3, 16-18, 47, 63-66, 86-87, 142.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. a3; See also 37-39.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-26, 67, 137-140, 189-190.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, 62.

Judgment.<sup>91</sup> Here is a passage which perhaps best exemplifies the distinct character of Williams's argument for toleration. The civil magistrate, he says,

beareth not the sword in vaine, but to cut off civil offences, yea, and the offendours too in case: But what is this to a blinde Pharisee, resisting the doctrine of Christ, who happily may be as good a subject, and as peaceable and profitable to the Civill State as any, and for his spirituall offence against the Lord Iesus, in denying Him to be the true Chrust, he suffereth the vengeance of a dreadful judgement both present and eternall, as before.<sup>92</sup>

At the core of Williams's argument is a radically predestinarian belief that false religion is no threat to either the church or the state. The reprobate who are already "dead in sin" cannot be killed because they are already damned. Conversely, the elect who are "alive in Christ" cannot be corrupted, and "cannot die a spiritual death." Therefore, false religion is no threat to the true church. But this is also why Williams opposes a national church. "The flock of Christ" and the "herds of the world" can live together in civil society, but the saints should not be forced to worship together with those who are 'unclean.'<sup>93</sup> He repeatedly emphasizes that only the will of God can open a man's heart to receive Grace, and that it is a presumption to think that human effort can have any ability to save souls.<sup>94</sup> As Thomas N. Corns has argued, Williams differs from other strict Calvinists in that he sees no obligation to govern the spiritual life of the reprobate; he "prefer[s] wholly to resign the spiritual life of citizens to the secret workings of God's determination." His views on toleration are deeply grounded in his strict Calvinist soteriology.<sup>95</sup> Once he has established that religious compulsion can do absolutely no good in the business of saving souls, Williams can argue from his experience in Rhode Island (and from the examples of prosperous non-Christian societies around the world) that one might be a perfectly good political subject without possessing religious truth.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 49, 53, 55-56.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 110, 127.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 64, 143.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas N. Corns, "John Milton, Roger Williams and the Limits of Toleration," in *Milton and Toleration*, edited by Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford, 2007), 76.

Norah Carlin has identified “the central political idea” in Williams’s tract as “the separation of church and state.”<sup>96</sup> This is indeed the American political legacy that Williams’s tract is now said to have helped establish. But this separation is deeply rooted in Williams’s strict Calvinist views, which maintain that a national church was an abominable notion not only because it might persecute God’s true faithful, but also because the elect should not enter communion with the unregenerate masses. It is true that Robinson also opposes the idea of a national church. But Robinson dwells on the subject of human fallibility, insisting that all churches in history have erred in one way or another, and that “no church can possibly be sure to be without a mixture of error and superstition.” Robinson argues that God prefers ‘conscientious’ men to search for truth, even if the search leads them into error.<sup>97</sup> Williams’s tract has virtually no trace of such sceptical reasoning, and no passages exalting the value of conscientious error. Unlike Goodwin, Walwyn, and Taylor, he emphasizes God’s vengeance, not his mercy. He does not commend the diversity of different consciences who might be saved on account of their common method. Williams wishes to demonstrate the value of bearing with evil for the purpose of civil peace and prosperity. His argument completely disconnects the civil order from godliness. Civil obedience is not an indicator of morally upright ‘conscientious’ dissent; it is something completely unrelated to salvation or damnation.

### **Godly Unity through Godly Liberty**

In my view, then, Williams is not pursuing the same end as Goodwin, Walwyn, Taylor, Milton or even Robinson. Since the purpose of this chapter has been to illuminate the similarities among these figures, I have perhaps been guilty of portraying them as too similar and obscuring their differences. Yet any reader who consults the historiography will quickly be cured of this error. I have tried to show that we should not necessarily think of the ‘Puritan’ and ‘moderate

---

<sup>96</sup> Norah Carlin. “Toleration for Catholics in the Puritan Revolution,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner. (Cambridge, 1996), 227.

<sup>97</sup> [Robinson], *Liberty of Conscience*, sig. a4, 48, 56.



Anglican' traditions of toleration as separate categories, because men like Goodwin and Taylor were driven much further apart by politics than they were by their views on religious toleration. I have chosen to reject the association of 'tolerance' with any particular religious group in this period – Independents, Anglicans or sectarians – and instead associate it with a particular understanding of true religion and line of argumentation. Yet the example of Roger Williams shows that even this approach is not perfect. His argument from toleration is predestinarian and separatist; it is not irenicist, 'rational' or sceptical. The other arguments are all designed, to varying extents, to unify the godly by exalting the type of the 'conscientious man,' whose peaceable religion is grounded in Scripture, reason, industry, and sound moral character. If, as they argue, liberty of conscience is an integral part of the true Christian religion, then the conscientious man, being the godliest of all men, is to be the basic unit of the true church, which will finally emerge as the crowning achievement of England's ongoing reformation.

Heiko Oberman has written that for historians, mediaeval and early modern toleration, based in notions of *pax* and *concordia*, "is increasingly understood as a limited programme for the consolidation of Christian society, clearly excluding dissidents and non-Christian confessions, not to be confused with the later quest for freedom of conscience and religious liberty." He argues that even John Locke still belongs to this earlier stage of toleration, despite some notably novel ideas in his thought.<sup>98</sup> But perhaps, among this group of mid-seventeenth-century English toleration writers, what we have is a situation in which both of these formulations are simultaneously present. The modern historian, depending on which formulation he or she is looking for, is able to see in the seventeenth-century literature both medieval and proto-liberal forms of toleration at work. In ways that secular modern readers may not be able to fully appreciate, these writers saw the consolidation of the truest, most properly 'Christian' society, as the desired end result of a carefully-delineated quest for

---

<sup>98</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, "The Travail of Tolerance: Containing Chaos in Early Modern Europe," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (Cambridge, 1996), 16.

freedom of conscience and religious liberty. But is the drive for unity through a limited degree of responsible liberty unique to early modern writers? Do modern states not seek to achieve the consolidation of a unified society by offering a measure of liberty to their citizens? If we substitute the modern citizen of the twenty-first century for the godly conscientious man of the seventeenth century, perhaps this program for the consolidation of the godly society through a limited and 'reasonable' liberty of conscience does not seem so foreign.

Nevertheless, early modern Protestant England was not a modern state, and the 'conscientious man' who is exalted by these early modern tolerationists was not a modern citizen. While such a transposition is tempting, and in some ways even revealing, in other ways it threatens to obscure one of the most basic points that I have pursued in this chapter. If we say that the only thing keeping early modern tolerationists from being modern liberals is the rejection of a godly society in favour of a secular one, we do them a severe injustice, because that godly society, however tolerant of 'conscientious' heterodoxy it was to be, was the one thing which they desired above all else, even in their arguments for toleration. How presentist a judgment is this: to proclaim that the only obstacle preventing them from becoming like us happens to be that very thing that they hope for and cherish more than anything else!

### **Chapter 3: Restoration and Reconciliation in the Judeo-Christian Millennium**

The 1650s bore witness to a considerable debate on the subject of official Jewish re-settlement in England. Historians of the subject have frequently noted the prominent role played by millenarian eschatology and Christian ‘philo-semitism’ in this debate. Peter Toon, for instance, concludes that “eschatological considerations” carried more weight in the 1650s than any of the other theological arguments for religious toleration. “If the Jews re-entered Britain,” Toon explains, “where they would meet some of the godliest people on earth their conversion to Christ could probably be hastened and the inauguration of the latter-day glory or millennium brought nearer.”<sup>1</sup> David S. Katz’s more thorough study elaborates on the work of Toon and others. According to Katz, “interest in contemporary Jewry was a by-product” of various intellectual trends, including millenarianism, which converged in mid-seventeenth-century England. The combined effect of these intellectual movements helped “bring the Jewish question to public attention and ... present contemporary Jews in a sympathetic light.” Nonetheless, Katz suggests that many English thinkers wanted “philo-semitism without Jews.” Millenarian interest in the calling of the Jews did not necessarily imply a desire to see them in England. “Most Englishmen,” Katz observes, “would rather have seen them in Palestine than in London.”<sup>2</sup>

Katz’s cautionary comments are pursued further by Nabil Matar. Referring to the millenarian belief in the imminent restoration of the Jews to Palestine as ‘Restorationism,’ Matar suggests that this belief can hardly be considered ‘tolerant’ because it called for the eradication of Jewish difference through conversion. “After the Restoration,” Matar argues, “there were to be more no

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge, 1970), 117. Lucien Wolf was of the opinion that “neither the friends of the Jews nor their enemies gave much heed to the temporal aspects of the re-admission question. The former were absorbed by its millennial bearings. They yearned for the opportunity it would afford them of gathering the dispersed remnant of Israel into the fold of Christ.” See Wolf, “Cromwell’s Jewish Intelligencers,” in his *Essays in Jewish History*, edited by Cecil Roth (London, 1934). See also A. M. Hyamson, *A History of the Jews in England* (London, 1908), 189-204; Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1964), 148-49, 155-58.

<sup>2</sup> D. S. Katz, *Philo-semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982), 32-33, 126, 244.

more Jews, only Protestant Christians with allegiance to England ... Restoration was predicated on a renunciation of Judaism.” Moreover, this supposed ‘philo-semitism’ was really just a part of the greater English Protestant desire to launch a millennial crusade against Islam. If, as the millenarians thought, the Jews were “future Protestants,” then they must be hostile to the Antichristian Muslims, and therefore their Restoration would act “as the spearhead of Protestantism into the Ottoman lands unbelief and ‘Mahometism.’”<sup>3</sup> Even more than Katz, Matar offers an important counterpoint to the historiography which otherwise tends to view ‘philo-semitic’ millenarian tracts as a welcome departure from medieval and early modern Christian anti-Judaic views. The recent surveys on tolerance in early modern England by Alexandra Walsham and John Coffey both treat conversionist millenarianism as an unexpected source of tolerationist literature.<sup>4</sup>

However, Matar’s argument raises an important question: does conversionism necessarily imply the eradication of Jewish difference? At first glance, the answer seems obvious. “There is neither Jew nor Greek,” the Apostle Paul wrote, “there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Yet the more ambiguous passages in the epistle to the Romans (especially chapters 9 and 11) have historically allowed for a wider degree of Christian speculation about the ultimate fate of the Jews. Like Matar, the editors of a recent volume on philo-semitism remind us that in the long historical view, “the philosemitism of many Christians has been motivated by a conversionist desire ultimately to erase Jewish distinctiveness altogether.” However, as these editors also point out, the aim of historians of philo-semitic phenomena should “not be to expose ‘false’ or self-interested philosemites, or to identify ‘true’ ones, but rather to comprehend the significance and function of positives perceptions of Jews and Judaism within their broader intellectual frameworks.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 1998), 174-77.

<sup>4</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), 245; John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow, UK, 2000), 157.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Sutcliffe and Jonathan Karp, “A Brief History of Philosemitism,” in *Philosemitism in History*, edited by Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge, 2011), 5, 10, 12.

In this chapter, I will argue that while Matar is right to point out that an anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim impulse did often (although not always) play a part in the 'Restorationist' hopes articulated by several mid-seventeenth-century English millenarians, it is an oversimplification to claim that these hopes were therefore principally motivated by English Protestant political self-interest, and that these millenarians believed that there would be "no more Jews, only Protestant Christians" after the conversion and restoration. In fact, I would suggest that these Restorationist millenarians were more likely than any other English Christians of the period to insist that Jewish difference was something that even Christ would not abrogate, that even conversion would not eliminate. Restorationists often went out of their way to exaggerate the providential importance of Jewish difference, and some even claimed that the converted Jews would have sovereignty over Gentile Christians in the millennium. This does not, of course, mean that these millenarians were necessarily more 'tolerant' than their contemporaries. As I will show, toleration for Jews in England was advocated only by some of these millenarians, and it was also advocated by some anti-millenarian English Christians. Yet while all of these toleration proposals were explicitly directed toward converting the Jews, it is only within the Restorationist millenarian proposals, I suggest, that the category of 'Jew,' however Christianized, would not be eliminated, but would continue to exist after Jewish conversion to Christianity.

### **'Restorationist' Millenarianism in England before 1649**

Millenarian eschatology draws on a particularly literal reading of specific portions of the apocalyptic books of the Bible, especially Daniel 7 and Revelation 20. While English Protestant millenarian views varied widely in particulars, they generally agreed that a war was coming between the servants of Christ and Antichrist, the latter of whom usually being 'Papists' and Turks, which would end in victory for the Christ's servants (the 'Saints'). After this victory, Satan would be bound for a thousand years (Rev. 20) while the Saints would rule the earth, possibly with Christ reigning in glory on earth as king. After this millennial 'Fifth

Monarchy,' so-called because it followed the destruction of the last of the four monarchies prophesied in Daniel 7:17-27, the Last Judgment would occur, and Christ and his Saints would ascend to Heaven to dwell in eternity with the Father. According to Peter Toon, "it was only in the seventeenth century that belief in a future millennium became 'respectable' [in Protestant England]. In the sixteenth century millenarianism was a heresy."<sup>6</sup> Reaching its peak in the late 1640s,<sup>7</sup> English millenarianism was a potent ideological force in the revolutionary 1640s and the radical 1650s.

Early modern English millenarians were not in complete agreement about the role that the Jews might have to play in Christ's kingdom. A common belief, however, was that the Jews and the Lost Tribes would be gathered together, return to Palestine, overthrow the Ottoman Empire, and play a central role in establishing the seat of the millennial kingdom in Jerusalem. An early and influential proponent of this view, which has been described by Nabil Matar as 'Restorationism' and by Richard Cogley as 'Judeo-centric' millenarianism, was Thomas Brightman (1562-1607).<sup>8</sup> Brightman explained that the Christian Apocalypse contained a survey of history from Christ's period right up to the end of time. The millennium, as the final stage of history, was to be a period of earthly glory for both Jews and Gentiles. The opening of the sixth vial described in

---

<sup>6</sup> Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge, 1970), 19. As Toon explains, 'chilastic' views like these had a long history in the Church, dating back to a number of early Fathers, but had generally been viewed as heretical since the time of Augustine, whose spiritual interpretation of the millenium became dominant. Luther and Calvin affirmed the Augustinian interpretation after millenarian views were adopted by more radical and marginal reformers like Thomas Müntzer. For other works on early modern English apocalypticism and millenarianism, see B.S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London, 1971); P. Christianson, *Reformers in Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto, 1978); C. Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1971); B. W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-century Revolution* (Penguin, 1993), 243. See also Toon, *Puritans*, 127-128.

<sup>8</sup> Nabil Matar, "The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1661-1701," *The Harvard Theological Review* 78.1/2 (1985), 115-148; R. W. Cogley, "The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Restoration of Israel in the 'Judeo-Centric' Strand of Puritan Millenarianism," *Church History* 72.2 (2003), 304-332. On Brightman's understanding of prophetic history and his place within the English apocalyptic tradition, see Avihu Zakai, "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition," in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin (Leiden, 1989), 31-44.

Revelation 16 would ensure the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and their restoration to Palestine, after which they would – with God’s assistance – destroy their enemies (the Turks and their allies) and restore their kingdom in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

However, the ‘Judeo-centric’ aspect of English millenarianism truly came into its own with Sir Henry Finch’s work *The Calling of the Iewes*, published in 1621 by the Puritan minister William Gouge. The dedicatory epistle is addressed “to all the seed of Iacob, farre and wide dispersed,” and to the “Daughter of Tsion by fleshly generation.” Finch invites world Jewry to claim their rightful place as inhabitants of a New Jerusalem, “for thee God hath honoured aboue all the people of the world, and given the prerogatiue first and last of his holy promises.” Referring to the sad state of contemporary world Jewry – dispersed, despised, and lacking the true religion – Finch’s epistle assures the Jews that God will soon gather them from all the corners of the earth. “His purpose,” Finch claims, “is to bring thee home againe, & to marry thee to himselfe for euermore ... thou shalt flourish as in the days of thy youth. To be the ioy of the earth, the most noble Church that euer eye did see.” The saviour, Christ, will soon come to them and “set up all his glory in the middest of thee, and make thee the wonder of the world.” The holy city will have a new and better Temple, gates of pearls, and streets of pure gold. All the kings of the Gentiles will bow down before the restored Israelite kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

The treatise itself echoes most of these claims. The prophesied calling of the Jews (Rom. 11) is to be “not of a few ... but of the Nation in generall.” Following Brightman, Finch claims that the gathered and converted Israelites will have a “marueilous conflict’ with Gog and Magog (the Turks) in Palestine, and with God’s help, they will succeed in “the vtter abolishing of the Turkish name.” They will then set up a new kingdom which will be more populous and glorious than ever before. The Gentiles, meanwhile, will have a place as servants and

---

<sup>9</sup> Brightman’s heterodox work was published only after his death. At least three editions were printed in the Netherlands (Amsterdam and Leiden) in the years between 1611 and 1616. The book was not printed in England until the beginning of the Civil War. It was then published in several different editions, with several different titles, between 1641 and 1644. See Toon, *Puritans*, 28-30; Katz, *Philo-semitism*, 91-93.

'handmaids' for the Jews in the millennial kingdom. While Finch insists that this will be a 'spirituall joyning' between Jews and Gentiles, and not a subjugation, he nonetheless maintains that "the chiefe soueraigntie and stroke of keeping men within the lists of their subjection and obedience vnto Christ, shall remaine among the Iewes." The other churches of the world will send their wealth to do 'seruice' to the Jewish church. The Levites will have special land privileges in the millennial kingdom. Finch estimated that the conversion would begin to take place in 1650, and that the final destruction of the Turks would occur no later than 1695.<sup>11</sup>

The preeminent position in the Christian apocalypse that Finch assigns to the Jews is startling, even if it is contingent upon a mass Jewish conversion to Christianity. The same God who once raised to Israelites to their ancient glory, only to make them the most despised people in the world, will once again elevate them above all other nations. In the end, Christ will not eliminate the difference between Jew and Gentile; he will actually reestablish it in his earthly kingdom. The Jews will receive a 'generall' redemption. The Gentiles will serve them willingly in Christ's kingdom. The Jewish church will be the most glorious church of all. The Jews, therefore, still retain a special status as God's honoured people. They retain the promises of the future restoration of Israel.

Mel Scult has argued that Finch's text shows a Christian interest in 'returning' the promises of the Old Testament to the Jews, in contrast to conventional "Christological interpretations" of the Hebrew prophecies which "had practically read the Jews out of the Old Testament altogether."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as Achsah Guibbory has suggested, this Judeo-centric interpretation explains why James I was incensed with the work and had both Finch and Gouge put in prison. By insisting that the Jew remained heirs to the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, "Finch had challenged the King's fantasy of being ruler over an Israelite England that would enjoy the blessings promised to the Jews in the Bible." Guibbory

---

<sup>10</sup> [Henry Finch] "To all the seed of Iacob," in *The Calling of the Iewes* (London, 1621), sig. a-sig. a3.

<sup>11</sup> [Finch], *The Calling of the Iewes*, 2-5, 8, 14, 36, 53, 55, 59-60.

<sup>12</sup> Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties* (Leiden, 1978), 20.



argues that this view was more fully developed by several millenarians of the Civil War and Interregnum periods, and she cites Robert Maton's 1642 work, *Israel's Redemption*, as the best example of a Judeo-centric strand of millenarianism. To insist upon the preeminence of the Jews in Christ's future kingdom, she argues, was effectively to deny an English Protestant claim to special status as the new Israel, a claim made not only by the early Stuart monarchs but also in several millenarian Parliamentary sermons during the 1640s by Puritan ministers such as Stephen Marshall and William Sedgwick.<sup>13</sup>

*Israel's Redemption* informs "the Christian reader" that it is good Christian doctrine to believe in the future salvation of the Jews, and that it is wrong for men to "rob the Jew, the more to enrich the Gentile" in discussing God's prophecies. Both Jew and Gentile err, Maton claims, when they claim the promises of the Messiah for themselves. These prophecies "belong indeed first and chiefly to the Jew, but onely, to neither." The actual text of the book opens with a provocative claim:

That Christ is already come, that as a prophet he hath cald us to repentance, and as a priest hath been a propitiation for our sins (and not for ours onely, but also for the sinnes of the whole world) having by once, offering himselfe, perfected for ever them that are sanctified, is the faith of Christians, & the infidelity of the Jews; but that he shall come as a King to reigne on earth, and restore againe the Monarchie of Israel, is the faith of the Jews, and the infidelity of Christians.<sup>14</sup>

While Maton concedes that it is equally difficult to persuade one of the other's belief, he maintains that "I find not in the Scriptures more voyces for the one, than for the other, and therefore do verily beleeeve, that neither tenet apart, but both together do make up the full and compleat mystery of our Redemption." Thus, Maton summarizes his entire treatise into two key points: first, "that the

---

<sup>13</sup> Achsah Guibbory, *Christian Identity, Jews, and Israel in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2010), 45, 188-89. William Sedgwick claimed in 1648 that England would become the "bosome of the earth where the divine glory chooseth to treasure up his richest *Jewels* ... to make *England* a happy Canaan, Father, Son and Spirit agree to dwell in it." See Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, 37-38.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Maton, *Israel's redemption or the propheticall history of our Saviours kingdome on earth; that is, of the church Catholicke, and triumphant* (London, 1642), 1-2.

Kingdome of the Jewes shall againe be restored unto them,” and second, “that our Saviour at his coming shall restore it.”<sup>15</sup>

The remnant of ‘Israel’ in Romans 11:25-26 (“all Israel will be saved”), Maton writes, clearly means the Jews. The Hebrew prophecies which promise the redemption of Israel remain unfulfilled, and this ‘redemption,’ Maton insists, must mean more than a simple conversion to Christianity. It must mean that the Jews will have a flourishing state in their own land between the time of their calling and the Last Judgment. Maton furnishes a list of Hebrew prophecies to illustrate his point. He then uses proof-texts from the New Testament to prove that Christ and the resurrected Saints will rule an earthly kingdom during the thousand-year binding of Satan. These two future kingdoms, he concludes, must be one and the same. Of the millennium, he says, “nought else can be meant, but the Jews inhabiting againe of their owne land, and the bringing of all other Nations into subjection to them; then it is evident, that Christs comming at this time, shall be to accomplish this thing to *Israel*, and consequently to receive his appointed Kingdome.” The millennium, Christ’s earthly kingdom, and the Restoration of Israel must all refer to the same period of latter-day glory.<sup>16</sup>

Maton’s work is thus an attempt to completely integrate the hoped-for Jewish messianic age into the Christian apocalypse, creating what one might call ‘Judeo-Christian’ millennium. As with Finch’s tract, the converted Jews maintain a distinct status in the millennium. The other nations will be in “subjection” to them. The millennium will reestablish their place as God’s chosen nation. God’s prophecies belong ‘chiefely’ (though not ‘onely’) to them. For this reason, Maton warns his Christian readers “not to contemne or revile the Jews, a fault too common in the Christian world.”<sup>17</sup>

John Archer, Maton’s contemporary, envisions something similar in *The personall reigne of Christ upon earth*, also published in 1642. According to Archer, a millennial earthly kingdom covering the entire world will be established by Christ at his second coming, and it will last until the final judgment. The

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 5-7,19, 31-32, 48-50, 59, 60-64.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 69.

Saints, who will be resurrected at the second coming, “shall be ruled like the Israelites under Salomon, themselves being as Lords,” while the wicked will be slaves.<sup>18</sup> But living alongside the Saints will be the Jews and the Lost Tribes of Israel. Christ, like his ancestor David, will rule all of the Tribes of Israel together, and “the Cities of the Tribes shall be built againe, and inhabited by naturall Israelites, especially Ierusalem, which shall be the most eminent city in the world, or that ever was in the world.” Moreover, even the Saints, in Archer’s millennium, do not have quite the same status as the converted Jews:

all the Gentiles which are Saints shall bee subjects of this Kingdome, Revel. 21. 24. but the Israelites shall have the greatest glory, as the elder brothers double portion, as the naturall branches of a stock before a wilde branch ingrafted, therefore it is called the Kingdome of Israel, Acts 1. 6. though it contain all saints (Israelites and Gentiles) because its primitive glory and principall; shall bee Israels, for indeed the Israelites shall bee first raised to this glory, and at Ierusalem will Christ begin to shew himselfe, and then by and from the Israelites shall glory descend to the Gentiles, as the Gospell first did.<sup>19</sup>

Archer estimates that the Jews and Lost Tribes will convert to Christianity in 1650 and 1656, after which the ‘Mahumitans,’ ‘Heathens’ and ‘Papists’ will band together to try to destroy them and the true churches. Christ will then return in glory around the year 1700 to destroy the wicked and establish his kingdom.<sup>20</sup>

Millenarian works and language became increasingly widespread in London throughout the 1640s, thanks largely to the Puritan preachers who supported the Parliamentary cause.<sup>21</sup> England’s uncertain political situation during the Civil Wars, as well as internal conflicts within the Puritan camp, no doubt overshadowed any interest in the Jews among most English millenarians during this period. An exception, however, can be found in the intellectual millenarianism of the ‘Hartlib circle,’ especially Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, and

---

<sup>18</sup> John Archer. *The personall reigne of Christ upon earth in a treatise wherein is fully and largely laid open and proved that Jesus Christ, together with the saints, shall visibly possesse a monarchicall state and kingdome in this world* (London, 1642), 2-3, 6-10, 12,13, 16, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 25-26.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 47-49.

<sup>21</sup> See especially Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, and the chapter on fast sermons in Hill, *The English Bible*.

their associates in Amsterdam. One such associate, the Moravian Jan Amos Comenius, came to England in 1641 to meet with Hartlib and Dury before the re-assembly of the Long Parliament. They set out to create a program of universal intellectual and social reform in preparation for the millennium. One of their proposals suggested that a college of Jewish studies be established in London for Christians, who could then use their improved understanding of the Jewish religion in their conversion efforts, strategically making Christianity less offensive to potential Jewish converts. This idea was proposed first in Dury and Hartlib's *Englands thankfulness* (1642), and then again in Dury's *A Seasonable Discourse* (1649).<sup>22</sup>

### ***Jewes in America and Providential History***

While the Hartlib Circle's concern with pre-millennial Jewish conversion may have been exceptional in England during the 1640s, John Dury's international contacts and conversionist activism played a central role in bringing the subjects of Jewish conversion and toleration into the spotlight in England in 1650 and afterward. The spark that ignited this debate was the suggestion that the American Indians might be descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel. Thomas Thorowgood, a Norfolk minister and member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines from 1643, consulted the Bible as well as Spanish, Portuguese and English colonial sources and determined that it was possible, perhaps even likely, that some of the Americans were of Israelite ancestry. Thorowgood himself was not a millenarian, but in 1648, he showed his manuscript to Dury, who brought it to another millenarian, Edward Winslow.<sup>23</sup> Dury also wrote to the Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel to ask his opinion. Ultimately, this resulted in the publication of three tracts in English in 1649 and 1650: one each by Winslow and

---

<sup>22</sup> R. H. Popkin, "Hartlib, Dury and the Jews," in *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, edited by Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Cambridge, 1994), 119-122, 124. Hartlib, Dury and Comenius also expressed interest in facilitating Muslim conversion in the 1640s, and sought to acquire English translations of the Qur'an and some commentaries. See Matar, *Islam in Britain*, 138-142.

<sup>23</sup> Richard W. Cogley, "The Ancestry of the American Indians: Thomas Thorowgood's Jewes in America (1650) and Jews in America (1660)," *English Literary Renaissance* 35.2 (2005), 304-308, 319-321.

Thorowgood (both including additional comments by Dury), and a third by the rabbi.

Winslow's *The glorious progress of the Gospel* (1649) is principally a collection of letters from two leading missionaries in New England, John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, reporting to interested English readers on their efforts to convert American Indians. In the introduction, Winslow cites Menasseh ben Israel and remarks on the similarity between American and ancient Israelite ceremonies. But what is most revealing to Winslow is the timing of this discovery. The potential discovery and conversion of the Lost Tribes at a time when the conversion of the Jews is imminently expected strikes Winslow as more than coincidence.<sup>24</sup> Dury's appendix to Winslow's work is even more suggestive that God's providence is working to begin the conversion and restoration of Judah and Israel. "The palpable and present acts of providence," Dury writes,

doe more then hint the approach of Jesus Christ: And the Generall consent of many judicious, and godly Divines, doth induce considering minds to beleeve, that the conversion of the Jewes is at hand. Its the expectation of some of the wisest Jewes now living, that about the year 1650. Either we Christians shall be Mosaick, or else that themselves Iewes shall be Christians. ... there may be at least a remnant of the Generation of Iacob in America, (peradventure some of the 10. Tribes dispersions.) And that those sometimes poor, now precious Indians (mentioned in those Letters) may be as the first fruits of the glorious harvest, of Israels redemption.<sup>25</sup>

While Dury warns that these are only 'conjectures,' he is hopeful that Christ is approaching, and that God is preparing the way for the conversion and redemption of both the Jews and the Lost Tribes, and thus for the return of Christ.<sup>26</sup> By actively converting American Indians, English missionaries may actually have a hand in initiating Israel's redemption. They have an opportunity to help set providential history in motion towards the conversion and restoration of all Israel.

---

<sup>24</sup> Edward Winslow, *The Glorious progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England* (London, 1649), sig. a4.

<sup>25</sup> J.D. [John Dury], "An appendix to the foregoing letters," in Winslow, *The Glorious progress of the Gospel*, 22-23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

The “epistolicall discourse” written by Dury and attached to Thorowgood’s book *Iewes in America* (1650) includes another dose of millennial speculation. Affirming that he read Thorowgood’s book with “delight and satisfaction,” Dury explains how he overcame his initial scepticism about Thorowgood’s argument, and expresses his amazement at the possibility that this is part of God’s providential scheme.<sup>27</sup> For Dury, Thorowgood’s argument adds a crucial piece to a providential puzzle of sorts concerning the coming of the millennium. The puzzle pieces include: Paul’s assurances concerning the conversion and salvation of all Israel; Hebrew prophecies “which foretell the calling of the Jewes, and their restitution to their owne land, together with the bringing back of the ten Tribes from all the ends and corners of the earth;” stories told to him in recent years by European Jews concerning the current whereabouts of the Lost Tribes; and general observations of political and social upheaval across the known world which are no doubt being effected by God’s providence “towards some great worke, and extraordinary revolution which may shortly come to passe.” For Dury, the global evidence for this ‘extraordinary revolution’ is becoming stronger and stronger, as the mechanisms of providential history become apparent. Nothing on earth happens by ‘meere chance.’ God’s providence “hath ordered all things from the beginning towards an end which hath been foreknown, and to a designe foretold.”<sup>28</sup> Dury concludes his tract by predicting that the Jews will rise to oppose both the Catholics and the Muslims in Spain, and that they will then gather from all around the world to converge on Jerusalem, where they will fight the battle of Armageddon.<sup>29</sup>

Dury also recounts some of the stories of Israelites in the New World which were told to him by Jews in the Netherlands. The most extensive and remarkable of these is the relation of Antonio de Montezinos, which he received from Menasseh ben Israel. Dury re-prints the Montezinos story in its entirety at the end of Thorowgood’s text. This story was also re-printed in *The Hope of*

---

<sup>27</sup> John Dury, “An Epistolicall Discourse Of Mr. Iohn Dury, to Mr. Thorowgood. Concerning his conjecture that the Americans are descended from the Israelites,” in Thomas Thorowgood, *Iewes in America* (London, 1650), sig. d-d4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, sig. d4.

*Israel* (1650), the English translation of the rabbi's recent messianic tract. In this work, Menasseh repeatedly maintains that Israelite tribes were the first planters of the Americas, and that they are racially distinct from the inferior American Indians. They are preserved there by God's providence until the appointed time for Israel's redemption, which Menasseh judges to be near.<sup>30</sup> The translator of *The Hope of Israel*, Moses Wall, attached some "considerations upon the point of the conversion of the Jewes" to the publication. In the work, Wall cites Romans 11 and reminds his readers that "God's covenant with the *Jewes* is not nulled, or broken, but only suspended." God's will is unchangeable, and therefore his particular love for the Israelite nation, his first wife, is eternal. He urges Christians to pray for the conversion of the Jews and to love them on account of Abraham.<sup>31</sup>

Dury, Winslow, and their friend Nathaniel Homes (who also corresponded with Menasseh) saw these events as a sign that the climax of world history was at hand.<sup>32</sup> It is worth noting that Dury was willing to cite post-Biblical Jewish authorities to show that the Jews, too, were expecting that the Messiah would shortly arrive to redeem Israel. Like Finch, Maton and Archer, Dury believed that the millennium and the Restoration of the Israelite Kingdom both referred to the same future phenomenon. While the Jews obviously failed to see that Christ was to be their Messiah, they did expect, correctly, that the Messiah was coming soon to gather the Lost Tribes and inaugurate a Messianic Kingdom on earth, centered in Jerusalem. Dury's was also a 'Judeo-centric' millenarianism, which maintained that the Jews had a distinct status in God's eyes even after their conversion to Christianity, and that some form of Jewish national election would be reestablished, not superseded, when Christ returned to rule the earth.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, sig. e4

<sup>30</sup> Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel: newly extant and printed in Amsterdam, and dedicated by the author to the high court the Parliament of England, and to the Councell of State*, trans. Moses Wall (London, 1651), 11-16, 22, 36, 41, 44. For thoughts on the rabbi's rigid racial distinction between Israelites and American Indians, see Yosef Kaplan, "Political Concepts in the World of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam during the seventeenth-century: The problem of exclusion and the boundaries of self identity," in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, 45-62.

<sup>31</sup> Moses Wall, "Considerations upon the point of the conversion of the Jewes," in Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, 47-49, 51-52.

<sup>32</sup> Richard H. Popkin, "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory," in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, 67-70.

## The Millennial Reconciliation of Jews and Christians

By 1650, Menasseh ben Israel was also corresponding with the Baptist millenarian minister Henry Jessey, sending him a gift copy of the most recent Latin edition of *The Hope of Israel*. Jessey's correspondence and publication activity around this time reveal a preoccupation with the imminent conversion and redemption of Israel. In an introduction for the Fifth Monarchist prophetess Mary Cary's book *The Little Horns Doom & Downfall* (1651), Jessey announced that the conversion of the Jews would be complete by 1658.<sup>33</sup> In 1650, Jessey produced a tract called *The Glory and Salvation of Iehudah and Israel*, which survives today only in a Dutch translation by Jessey's friend Petrus Serrarius. This work bears the imprimatur of several prominent English millenarians, including Dury and Homes, both of whom expressed the hope that the treatise would find a willing audience among world Jewry. While Jessey's goal is undoubtedly conversionist, his method is unusual in that he relies heavily on Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources to prove to Jews that Jesus is their Messiah. Ernestine van der Wall argues that in using this approach, "Jessey not only shows his skill in Hebrew and Judaic literature, but also his deep respect for Jewish authorities."<sup>34</sup>

The purpose of Jessey's work, according to van der Wall, is to reconcile Jews and Christians by showing them both that they await the same Messiah. Jessey's preface is addressed to the remnant of Israel, which was soon to be delivered from its oppressors by the Messiah. He devotes the first two chapters to a long exposition about the Jews' proper place as the most privileged nation in the world, as God's first-born who have received countless blessings. As Jessey describes the millennial kingdom that is to come, he tries, like Maton, to convince both Jews and anti-millenarian Christians of their errors, and answers anti-millenarian objections.<sup>35</sup> I would argue that Jessey's approach to the Jewish religion is ecumenical as much as it is conversionist or 'tolerant.' As David S.

---

<sup>33</sup> David S. Katz, "Menasseh ben Israel's Christian Connection: Henry Jessey and the Jews," in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, 121-123.

<sup>34</sup> E. G. E. van der Wall, "A Philo-Semitic Millenarian on the Reconciliation of Jews and Christians: Henry Jessey and his 'The Glory and Salvation of Iehudah and Israel,'" in *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, edited by David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel (Leiden, 1990), 170, 184.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 167-69, 176-77, 183.



Katz has noted, “Jessey saw the obstacles for unity between Christianity and Judaism as the result of misunderstanding rather than conviction.”<sup>36</sup> Not only does Jessey maintain a ‘Judeo-centric’ form of millenarianism which emphasizes that the Jews will soon be restored to their rightful place as the most privileged nation in the world, but he also sees the rabbinic tradition as something which can point toward Christ, not as something which keeps the Jews shrouded in darkness.

Jessey’s observance of the Saturday Sabbath, beginning in the evening, may serve as another example of an ecumenical attitude toward Jewish religion.<sup>37</sup> Jessey remained quiet about his observance of the Seventh-Day Sabbath in public life, but another Saturday Sabbatarian, William Saller, named Jessey as a contributor to his 1653 tract defending the observance of the Saturday Sabbath.<sup>38</sup> Saller and John Spittlehouse, a Marshal-General in the New Model Army and a Fifth Monarchist, together published an appeal for the institution of the Seventh Day Sabbath in England. Spittlehouse and Saller suggested that this “would be a means to remove a great stumbling-block to the Jews,” who see Christians as Sabbath-breakers. To change the Christian Sabbath to the seventh day would pull down the ‘wall of partition’ between Jews and Gentiles, and may serve as “a preparative to the accomplishing of those glorious Prophecies, which hold forth the unity which shall be betwixt Jew and Gentile.”<sup>39</sup>

Also in 1657, the Colchester Saturday-Sabbatarian leader Thomas Tillam published a strongly millenarian tract calling for the institution of the Seventh-Day Sabbath. Tillam prophesied that the imminent return of Jesus would make the Jews ‘a glorious people.’ He quoted part of a letter he had received from an unnamed Saturday-Sabbatarian in London which described good relations with the Jewish community there. The letter writer expressed the hope that the Jews, impressed with Christian observance of the Saturday Sabbath, might become more willing converts. This suggestion, Tillam added, caused his heart to

---

<sup>36</sup> Katz, “Henry Jessey and the Jews,” 137.

<sup>37</sup> Katz, *Philo-semitism*, 21-32.

<sup>38</sup> William Saller, *Sundry queries formerly tendred to the ministers of London for clearing the doctrine of the Fourth Commandment and the Lord's Sabbath-day but now tendred to the consideration of all men* (London, 1660).

'tremble.'<sup>40</sup> While the suggestions of Spittlehouse, Saller and Tillam certainly reflect a hope for pre-millennial Jewish conversion to Christianity, there is also a kind of 'Judeo-Christian' ecumenism at work here. Saturday-Sabbatarians like Tillam, Jessey, Saller, and Spittlehouse envisaged a union between the Israelites and the Gentile Saints under Christ in the coming millennial kingdom. To actually change the Christian religion to make it more like Judaism, in part to make it more palatable to potential Jewish converts, constitutes a radical departure from more conventional Christian conversionism.<sup>41</sup>

### **Millenarians and Jewish Readmission**

However, the real debate about Jewish re-settlement in England, framed in both religious and economic terms, came to a head in 1655, the year that Menasseh ben Israel arrived in London petitioning the Lord Protector and the Council of State for an official toleration. The official response to this petition came in December 1655, when Oliver Cromwell hosted a conference at Whitehall to debate the subject of Jewish readmission.<sup>42</sup> Major-General Edward Whalley, a

---

<sup>39</sup> William Saller and John Spittlehouse, *An appeal to the consciences of the chief magistrates of this common-wealth, touching the Sabbath-Day* (London, 1657), 13.

<sup>40</sup> D. S. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-century England* (Leiden, 1988), 35-36; Thomas Tillam, *The seventh-day Sabbath sought out and celebrated* (London, 1657), 49-51.

Tillam's correspondent was not Saller, because the letter claims that the Jews were pleased with "Brother Sallars prayer" from the Restoration of Israel. It may, however, have been Spittlehouse.

<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Spittlehouse and the New England missionary John Eliot both suggested that English law should be reformed according to the Old Testament, in anticipation of the millennium, and that this might help to make the Jews more receptive to conversion. But several other contemporary Puritans, such as John Cotton and William Aspinwall, also suggested the establishment of the Mosaic law in England without showing much interest in Jewish conversion. See John Spittlehouse, *Certain queries propounded to the most serious consideration of those persons now in power* (London, 1654), 10-11; John Eliot, *The Christian common-wealth or, The civil policy of the rising kingdom of Jesus Christ* (London, 1659) sig. b2-c2; John Cotton, *An abstract of laws and government* (London, 1655); W.A. [William Aspinwall], *The legislative power is Christ's peculiar prerogative* (London, 1656). See also Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, 159-169, 191. For another example of Christian interest in reforming society based on the Old Testament which did not lead to an interest in contemporary Jews, see Arthur H. Williamson's discussion of John Knox in "British Israel and Roman Britain: The Jews and Scottish Models of Polity from George Buchanan to Samuel Rutherford," in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, edited by Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner (Dordrecht, 1994), 97-117.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed description of these events, see Katz, *Philo-semitism*, ch. 6, Guibbory, *Christian Identity*, ch. 7, as well as the classic works by Wolf, Hyamson and Roth cited above in n. 1, and H. S. Q. Henriques, *The return of the Jews to England: being a chapter in the history of English law* (London, 1905).

close supporter of Cromwell, wrote to the Secretary of State John Thurloe on December 12 that he was glad to see “so godly and prudent a course taken concerning the Jews.” Whalley could not understand why this met with so much opposition, considering that there were “both politique and divine reasons” for their readmission – conversion and wealth. Yet the opposition was considerable. Anti-readmission polemicists like William Prynne produced detailed historical relations of Jewish misconduct in England and elsewhere, resurrecting medieval allegations of ritual murder. Prynne characterized Jews as “Antichristian” and specifically denied them any role in the End of Days. The first part of Prynne’s work was disseminated in time for the final session of the conference at Whitehall.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, a number of works appeared advocating toleration for Jews for the purposes of conversion. The tract which most startlingly articulates a Judeo-centric and Restorationist millenarian vision is the Baptist Thomas Collier’s *A brief answer* (1655). Collier’s title page proclaims that it is England’s ‘duty’ to admit the Jews. In the dedicatory epistle to the Lord Protector, Collier makes an explicitly Restorationist appeal to Cromwell’s sense of pre-millennial destiny, suggesting that it is possible “that you may not onely be an instrument to help forward their conversion, but God may make you not only as a nursing father to them here, but an instrument in his hand to help them in to their own Countrey, for thither they shall return by whom or by what means, time will manifest.” Collier looks everywhere for the hand of providence in bringing the Jews to England. Although he denies that the Jewish interest in England comes primarily from a shrewd economic opportunism, he adds that even ‘covetousness’ may be God’s chosen means to a more glorious end. Nobody knows how their conversion will happen, he writes, but by allowing them into England, we may be chosen by God to act as his instruments. In these last times, noticing that the Jews suddenly wish to live amongst us in England, and that the most godly of the English wish to

---

<sup>43</sup> Guibbory, *Christian Identity*, 233-36; Katz, *Philo-semitism*, 210, 220-223; see esp. William Prynne, *A short demurrer to the Jewes long discontinued barred remitter into England* (London, 1656).

bring them in, should we not, Collier asks, see the hand of God at work bringing us together like this?<sup>44</sup>

Collier especially dwells on Paul's directive not to boast against the fallen olive branches (Romans 11:18-21), and warns his fellow Gentiles that it is dangerous to presume to "own Christ." This is reminiscent of Maton's earlier warning against the urge to "rob the Jew, the more to enrich the Gentile." For Collier, as for Maton, to imagine Christ as the King only of the Gentiles (or, even more particularly, the English) is to take a narrow view of the longer providential narrative of history. Gentiles must remember that the Jews were the first to receive God's favour, that they have rejected Christ only for a time, and that "God still owns them as his people, and hath a special eye over them." In the future, God will exact vengeance on all those who have wronged the Jews, because they remain "those that God will own before all the Nations."<sup>45</sup>

Collier makes his exceptionalist view of the Jews equally clear in *The Day-Dawning and the Day-star arising to the dispersed of Judah and Israel*, also published in 1655. This text, addressed to the Jews (although it is hard to know if any Jew ever read it), provides a mixed message of assurance and exhortation: assurances regarding the glory of the soon-to-be-restored Israelite kingdom, exhortations to accept Christ so that this kingdom may come into being. Collier describes the millennial kingdom, centered in Jerusalem, and tells the Jews that "in this day of the reign of Christ, will he gather together the dispersed of *Judah* and *Israel* into their own land" in fulfillment of ancient prophecy.<sup>46</sup> This work is intended as a response to Menasseh ben Israel's *The Hope of Israel*, and Collier cites him numerous times and carefully chooses many of the same Hebrew prophecies as proof-texts. After explaining the gathering of Israel and Judah, Collier praises Menasseh's messianic work for its "clearness in this part of the truth." Since he lacks the formal education and knowledge of Hebrew which

---

<sup>44</sup> [Thomas Collier], *A brief answer to some of the objections and demurs made against the coming in and inhabiting of the Jews in this common-wealth* (London, 1655), sig. a3, 11-12, 18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6, 16, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Collier. *The Day-Dawning and the Day-star arising to the dispersed of Judah and Israel. Wherein is briefly handled Their Call and Christs Second Coming, whose day is neer at hand.* London, 1655), 47-63, esp. p. 58.

allowed Henry Jessey to show his familiarity with Jewish authorities, this praise for Menasseh's work is the best Collier can offer to try to show that the reconciliation of Jews and Christians is possible. Perhaps most curiously, Collier praises the Jews for their continued practice of endogamy, which has preserved them as a distinct people awaiting the Messiah's coming.<sup>47</sup>

Henry Jessey was among the group of divines, politicians, lawyers and merchants selected to take part in the Whitehall Conference in December 1655. Not long afterward, he published one of the two complete narratives of the conference's events. Jessey's account neatly divides the delegates into three groups. "The most," he writes, feared that toleration would allow the Jews to seduce and cheat the English. "The major part" were willing to consider readmission if steps were taken to prevent Jewish cheating and blasphemy. The smaller third group argued, like Collier's tract above, that it was England's duty to readmit the Jews. Jessey himself certainly formed a part of this third group, and he explains in detail the various arguments that the pro-readmission side had used. Cromwell, according to Jessey, "shewed a favourable inclination" toward Jewish re-settlement in England, as did some members of the Council of State. But seeing that the delegates could not reach an agreement, Cromwell dismissed the assembly and asked them to pray for the Lord's guidance.<sup>48</sup>

John Dury was away in Germany in December 1655. His argument for Jewish readmission was published by Samuel Hartlib in 1656 after the conference had already taken place. Dury argues that it is both 'lawful' and 'expedient' to admit Jews into the English commonwealth, but he leaves any discussion of millennial considerations out of the proposal for readmission, writing only at the end that "though I believe as much of them, as most men do; yet I can draw no argument from thence for any particular admittance of them at this time," because such matters are better left to the unknowable workings of God's providence. "We are very much inclined," he adds, "to make mistakes in conjectures of that

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 4, 41-42, 64-65.

<sup>48</sup> [Henry Jessey], *A narrative of the late proceedings at White-hall concerning the Jews* (London, 1656).

nature.”<sup>49</sup> The word ‘conjectures,’ of course, is precisely the word Dury had used six and seven years earlier to describe his own enthusiastic contributions to Thorowgood and Winslow’s works. This more cautious approach in 1656 indicates that perhaps the radical 1650s had tempered his optimism.<sup>50</sup>

Dury rejects any economic arguments for Jewish readmission, and establishes “the glory of God” as the chief criterion for whether an action to be taken by the state is ‘expedient.’ It must be made absolutely clear to the Jewish immigrants, he says, “that the intention of the State in admitting of them is not to have profit or temporall advantages by them ... but rather out of Christian love and compassion towards them ... and for the hope that we have, that all his goodness shall be fulfilled both in them and in us, when the Messiah shall return in his glory.” Such a show of kindness, Dury suggests, may help to “open a doore in their hard hearts.”<sup>51</sup> Despite his cautious approach to the millennial hope underpinning his desire to convert the Jews, Dury still cannot resist an allusion to the future glory of Christ’s return, and the suggestion that the godly English may play a part, however small, in Israel’s future redemption.

To this conversionist end, Dury suggests that the Jews are to be ‘fairly induced’ to a few things. They shall be forbidden from taking proselytes, working on Sunday, or blaspheming Jesus’s name. They must listen to Christian proselytizing efforts with patience and without contradiction. They shall be required to give an account of their own faith and practices, and to answer questions about their religion from inquisitive Christians. Christians and Jews alike should work to prevent these ‘friendly’ discussions of religion from becoming contentious disputes.<sup>52</sup> Despite what David S. Katz has written, Dury

---

<sup>49</sup> John Dury, *A Case of Conscience; Whether it be lawful to admit Jews into a Christian commonwealth?* (London, 1656), 2, 8-9.

<sup>50</sup> In a recent article, Kenneth Gibson has called for a ‘reassessment’ of Dury’s apocalyptic thought, and suggested that historians have frequently and uncritically misrepresented Dury as a millenarian. Gibson’s principal source is Dury’s cautious and mystical preface to the anonymous millenarian tract *Clavis Apocalyptica* (1651) published by Hartlib. See Gibson, “John Dury’s Apocalyptic Thought: A Reassessment,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61.2 (2010), 299-313. Gibson’s article, however, does not touch on how Dury’s Restorationist views regarding the Jews relate to these more complex views of the apocalypse. This question requires further investigation which is unfortunately not possible here.

<sup>51</sup> Dury, *Case of Conscience*, 3, 7.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

does not forbid Jews from discussing their religion with Christians, and he does not seem not overly concerned with the propagation of ‘Judaizing heresies.’<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, Dury demands that the Jews be prepared to give an account of their faith. This requirement is likely the result of the same conversionist reasoning Dury used to argue for the creation of a College of Jewish Studies in the 1640s: a better understanding of the Jewish religion, he thought, would actually be helpful to Christians in their efforts to show Jews that Christianity was the fulfillment of Judaism, and that Jesus was their long-expected Messiah. His chief concern was not Jewish ‘heresies’ but rather Jewish financial domination and political subversion. English efforts to prevent this, however, should be gentle, “not as here in *Germany*, by making them base and vile, but by other more friendly wayes.” What exactly Dury means by ‘friendly wayes’ is not clear. He suggests that this matter be left to the ‘vigilance’ of the state.<sup>54</sup>

### **Non-millenarian Proposals for Jewish Toleration**

In some respects, Dury’s proposal for toleration of Jews bears a resemblance to some of the proposals made by non-millenarian conversionist writers. Yet these were generally much more restrictive and more anti-Judaic in tone. The Scottish minister John Weemse (1636) specifically rejected the millennial restoration of the Jews to Canaan. Weemse advocated the toleration of Jews in a Christian commonwealth, but without the full privileges accorded to Christian subjects. This toleration could not apply to those Jews who maintained the Jewish ‘affection’ of blaspheming Christ. Jews should be strongly encouraged but not compelled to convert, Weemse argued, noting that forced converts frequently returned to the ‘vomit’ of the Jewish religion.<sup>55</sup> In 1650, Edward Spencer, a member of the Rump Parliament, wrote a response to Menasseh’s *The Hope of Israel* offering a toleration expressly for the purposes of conversion. Spencer suggested that England was the most likely nation on earth to perform the ‘glorious action’ of converting the Jews to Christianity. However, he rejected the

---

<sup>53</sup> Katz, *Philo-semitism*, 216-219.

<sup>54</sup> Dury, *Case of Conscience*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> John Weemse, *A treatise of the fovre degenerate sonnes* (London, 1636), 337-342, 373-375.

story of Montezinos and mocked any potential Jewish cooperation with misguided millenarians, telling Menasseh to “be not so stupid to looke for an earthly kingdome.” Spencer dismissed the rabbi’s work as ‘vaine and frivolous’ and maintained that Jews stink of the blood of Christ. His proposed toleration was severely restrictive: Jewish parents would lose half their estate for circumcising one of their own children on English soil; two-thirds of an unconverted Jew’s estate would go to the state upon his death; all Jews would be compelled to attend a Good Friday service.<sup>56</sup>

After 1655, some early Quakers also began to make a number of efforts to reach out to Jews and convert to Christianity. The first significant effort came from Margaret Fell (later Margaret Fox) who published a response to Menasseh ben Israel’s petition in 1656, followed by *A loving salutation to the seed of Abraham among the Jewes* in 1657. Fell continued to publish in this vein into the 1660s. She went to great efforts to have her works translated into Hebrew and Dutch for dissemination among the Jewish communities of Europe, beginning with Amsterdam. *A loving salutation* was published in Hebrew in Holland in 1658, with the assistance of a number of Quakers there and quite possibly the recently-excommunicated Baruch Spinoza. Her friends, particularly Samuel Fisher, may have distributed it to Jewish communities as they traveled through Europe.<sup>57</sup>

Early Quaker eschatology, however, was not inclined toward a Restorationist millenarianism or any recognition of national particularity, and this is evident in Fell’s pamphlets. For Quakers, only the first coming of Christ had been in the flesh; the second coming of Christ had already occurred in the form of the Inner Light offered universally to all human beings.<sup>58</sup> While this belief in the universal Inner Light led Quakers to reach out to the seed of the divine in

---

<sup>56</sup> E.S. [Edward Spencer], *A Breife Epistle to the Learned Manasseh Ben Israel, in answer to his, Dedicated to the Parliament* (London, 1650), 1-2, 5-10, 12, 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> Achsah Guibbory, “Conversation, Conversion, Messianic Redemption: Margaret Fell, Menasseh ben Israel, and the Jews,” in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, edited by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia, MO, 2000) 215-16; Richard H. Popkin. “Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,” in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews*, 67.

<sup>58</sup> T. L. Underwood, “Early Quaker Eschatology,” in Toon, *Puritans*, 91-103.



Christians, Jews, Muslims and 'heathens' alike, it also meant that to continue to see the Jews as exceptional in any way, or to believe in the future millennial kingdom on earth, was to miss the point of the second coming entirely. Fell, then, understandably condemns Jewish worship as an abomination, and exhorts Menasseh to "give over your outward washings, your outward observances and Ceremonies, and carnall ordinances, they are beggarly and filthy, and the Lord abhorres them." Outward Jews belong to the 'Synagogues of Sathan,' while inward Jews are the true Jews who serve God.<sup>59</sup>

While the Judeo-centric millenarians insist that God's ancient covenant with the Jews is still in force, and will be restored in the coming millennial kingdom, Fell invites the Jews to participate in a new covenant, which is offered to human beings of all nations. The Inner Light is God's method for teaching all nations, with no exceptions. "The dayes are past and gone," she writes, "wherein the Covenant was written in Tables of stone."<sup>60</sup> She has no interest in the continued importance of either Jewish national difference or any Jewish religious practice. As Achsah Guibbory has written,

Fell's 'loving' approach to the Jews is compromised by her deep hostility to Judaism. The supposed 'universalism' of her community, its inclusiveness, turns out to be exclusive as it rejects Jewish difference ... Fell reveals, for all her Quaker sympathy for the Jews and her desire to welcome them into England, an underlying antipathy that can be alleviated only by the erasure of Jewish difference.<sup>61</sup>

Fell's conversionist program, then, is much more interested in eradicating Jewish difference than that of the millenarians, who believe that Jewish conversion will not destroy Jewish difference but will actually fulfill the true purpose of that difference, and sometimes even suggest that aspects of the 'carnal' Jewish religion will become normalized for both Jews and Gentiles in the millennium.

---

<sup>59</sup> Margaret Fell, *For Manasseh Ben Israel. The Call of the Jewes Out of Babylon*, (London, 1656) 4, 15-20.

<sup>60</sup> M. F. [Margaret Fell], *A loving salutation to the seed of Abraham among the Jewes: where ever they are scattered up and down upon the face of the earth* (London, 1657) 2-3, 9, 19, 21.

<sup>61</sup> Guibbory, "Conversation, Conversion, Messianic Redemption," 225.

### **Searching for the ‘Christian Jew’**

A final significant chapter in the ‘Judeo-centric’ millenarianism of the 1650s came when Rabbi Nathan Shapira visited Amsterdam in 1657 to solicit money for the poor and suffering Jews of Jerusalem. After failing to gain support from the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam, the rabbi turned to some of local Christian millenarians, including Petrus Serrarius, who related the situation to his long-time friends John Dury and Henry Jessey. Before long, a pamphlet appeared in London which was printed for the same bookseller as the two 1655 works by Thomas Collier. It is unclear who exactly composed the pamphlet, but it is likely that both Dury and Jessey had a hand in it. The combined efforts of Dury and Jessey collected three hundred pounds which were sent to the Jews of Jerusalem, along with a proselytizing letter written by London ministers.<sup>62</sup>

The pamphlet, which claims to discover the “footsteps of Providence,” is addressed to the Christian reader who is “acquainted with the Prophecies which concern the Jewish Nation.” The tone of pre-millennial providence quickly asserts itself in the tract, as the pamphlet suggests that the reader “ought to consider seriously what God is now doing towards” the redemption of all Israel. The recent upheaval in the world, and certain extraordinary events concerning world Jewry, are signs of this coming redemption. The pamphlet then describes Rabbi Shapira as a pious and humble man, and suggests that his understanding of the Messiah is surprisingly close to the principles of Christianity, which gives hope that the Jews may be presently “more susceptible of the Truth of the Gospel, then at any time heretofore.”<sup>63</sup>

As evidence of this, the pamphlet then presents a translation of a letter written by Serrarius describing his encounter with Shapira. After a detailed relation of the rabbi’s apparent opinion concerning the Messiah, Serrarius exclaims that “when I heard these things, my bowels were inwardly stired within me, and it seemed to me, that I did not hear a Jew, but a Christian, and a Christian

---

<sup>62</sup> Popkin. “Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,” 64-65; Katz, “Henry Jessey and the Jews,” 126-133.

of no mean understanding, who did relish the things of the Spirit, and was admitted to the inward mysteries of our Religion.” Apparently, the rabbi even went so far as to proclaim that the New Testament contained ‘the ground and fountain of all Wisdom.’ Serrarius concludes that this rabbi must be very near to Christ indeed. “I confess,” he writes, “I think I see Christ in his Spirit; and I cannot but love him, and those that are like him, of which he saith many are at Jerusalem.”<sup>64</sup> The rabbi’s sincerity in this conversation with Serrarius has been questioned, but as Richard Popkin has noted, whatever R. Shapira’s actual convictions, for the millenarians, he was “a striking case of a Christian Jew.”<sup>65</sup>

The English author of the pamphlet concludes from the evidence presented that God is preparing the way for the conversion of world Jewry to Christianity. Moreover, the author adds that good Christians, who “freely love them [the Jews] for Christs sake” can play a role in God’s pre-millennial plan by treating Jews kindly:

In expectation whereof, all whose hearts are touched with compassion to them in their bleeding condition, and have longing desires for their deliverance, are exhorted to testifie the same by their prayers, and by the opening of their heart and hand liberally towards them. And how blessed shall they be that shall have a hand in helping to make Jerusalem a Glory in the whole Earth!”<sup>66</sup>

The greatest glory of the coming millennial kingdom will reside in Jerusalem, the seat of Christ’s kingdom, with the converted Jews. The Gentile Christians whose kindness helps the Jews to convert shall be blessed by association with this highest glory. This sentiment recalls Henry Finch’s hope in 1621 that he would “reape abundant fruit of these my trauailes, if in the day of thy rejoycing ... it may be sayd that I haue layd one stone (say it be but a peble stone) toward thy spirituall building.”<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> *An information, concerning the present state of the Jewish nation in Europe and Judea. Wherein the footsteps of Providence preparing a way for their conversion to Christ, and for their deliverance from captivity, are discovered* (London, 1658), 1-11.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-16.

<sup>65</sup> Popkin, “Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,” 65.

<sup>66</sup> *An information, concerning the present state of the Jewish nation*, 17-18.

<sup>67</sup> [Finch], “To all the seed of Iacob,” sig. a3.

## **Otherness and Godliness, Unification and Exceptionalism**

Ernestine van der Wall has argued that Petrus Serrarius believed millenarianism could be “a solution to both Jewish and Christian blindness” which would pave the way for the ‘reconciliation’ of Jews with Christians. Serrarius repeatedly suggested that Jews and Christians were expecting the same glorious appearance of the Messiah. Most Christians, he claimed, refused to seriously consider the belief in an earthly messianic kingdom because they could not admit that the Jews might possess a truth that remained hidden to themselves. Thus, van der Wall writes, “as he tried to convert Jews to Christianity, so, in a sense, he sought to ‘convert’ anti- or non-millenarian Christians to millenarianism.”<sup>68</sup> This notion, that millenarianism resolves errors made by both Jews and Christians, is common to several of the English millenarians that I have discussed in this chapter, particularly Robert Maton, Henry Jessey and Thomas Collier. It also recalls Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638), the German millenarian theologian whose eschatology was translated into English in the 1640s. Alsted responded to the accusation that millenarians were Judaizers by declaring that “therefore also the Scripture doth Judaize.”<sup>69</sup> William Aspinwall, another English millenarian who argued that the converted Jews would have the ‘chief honour’ of setting up Christ’s Kingdom in Jerusalem, also berated non-millenarian Christians for failing to believe, as the Jews did, in Christ’s earthly kingdom.<sup>70</sup>

One way to try to understand the theological basis of early modern ‘Judeo-centric’ or Restorationist millenarianism is to see it as one of many possible solutions to the problem of the Jews in Protestant eschatology, a problem rooted in the literal interpretation of the Romans 11. The Geneva Bible’s commentary on Romans 11:26 explains that “the whole nation of the Jews, though not every one particularly, shall be joined to the Church of Christ.” As James Shapiro has

---

<sup>68</sup> E.G.E. van der Wall. “Petrus Serrarius and Menasseh ben Israel: Christian Millenarianism and Jewish Messianism in Seventeenth-century Amsterdam,” in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, 177-179.

<sup>69</sup> R.G. Clouse, “The Rebirth of Millenarianism,” Toon, *Puritans*, 53. Alsted also suggested that Christians should pay more attention to the mystery of Jewish conversion.

<sup>70</sup> [Aspinwall], *The legislative power*, sig. a3, 4, 10, 14.

argued, sixteenth-century English theologians were content to maintain a national, or even racial, sense of the Jews, even in referring to their eventual conversion to Christianity. The alternative, that the Jewish nation could mix with others and dissolve, “rendered Paul’s claims about the conversion and restoration of the Jews incoherent.” From their point of view, the promise of Jewish conversion made no sense unless it was a national conversion. Another Restorationist, the Boston minister Increase Mather, explained in 1669 that the Jews had maintained a level of national purity unlike any other nation on the planet, a result of God’s providence.<sup>71</sup> This may help to explain Thomas Collier’s praise for the Jews’ continued practice of endogamy. While Collier emphasized that national particularity was of no consequence under the universal message of the Gospel,<sup>72</sup> his understanding of Jewish conversion, like that of the other millenarians discussed in this chapter, is of a general national conversion in preparation for the millennium.

One question, rightly posed by Shapiro, is this: what happens to this pure, unmixed Jewish national ‘otherness’ upon conversion to Christianity, especially if this conversion is a general national conversion? In my view, the seventeenth-century Restorationist and ‘Judeo-centric’ strand of English millenarianism must be seen, at least partly, as an answer to this problem of post-conversion Jewish national difference. Katz correctly notes that most English millenarians were more likely to want to see the Jews in Palestine than in London. This is also what leads Nabil Matar to conclude that after 1656, and particularly in the eighteenth century, Restorationism was in fact “the hallmark of the anti-Jewish position” in England, as some Restorationists called for the expulsion of Jews from England and their return to Palestine.<sup>73</sup> The belief in the national Restoration of the Jews in their own land served English Protestant political purposes, by launching a war against the Turks in the Holy Land, and for some Restorationists, it also relieved the English of any duty toward tolerating the Jewish ‘Other’ on their own soil.

---

<sup>71</sup> James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York, 1996), 168-69.

<sup>72</sup> Collier, *The Day-Dawning*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> Matar, *Islam in Britain*, 171.

Nonetheless, there are a number of problems with Matar's view of Restorationist millenarianism. First, he places perhaps too much weight on the idea that Restorationism was a Protestant fantasy which would enable a crusade specifically against the Muslim Turks. While Brightman and Finch do specifically explain that the converted Jews will battle the Turks in the Holy Land, other Restorationists, including Archer and Dury, argue that the Jews will fight against a coalition which included Turks as well as Catholics and heathens. Still others, including Maton and Collier, do not mention the Turks at all, and are much more vague in describing the forces of Antichrist.<sup>74</sup>

A second problem arises from Matar's claim that "after the Restoration, there would be no more Jews, only Protestant Christians with allegiance to England," because the Jews would not be restored to Palestine until they converted to Christianity. So-called 'philo-semitism,' he argues, was conditional not only on the Jews' conversion to Christianity, but also on "their adoption of English culture and identity." In Matar's view, Restorationist beliefs were fundamentally self-serving, and the Jews were little more than "an instrument in England's theological aspirations," helping to "fulfill England's role as the messianic kingdom."<sup>75</sup> Matar's argument suggests that millenarians saw the restored and converted Jewish state in Palestine as a part of an English imperialist fantasy in which the millennial age would extend godly English dominion over the whole globe, and that this dominion would be specifically English and Protestant.

This argument, however, is difficult to reconcile with the suggestions of several millenarians, including Finch, Maton, Archer, Aspinwall, and others, that the converted Jews would have a higher status than the Gentile Saints in Christ's millennial kingdom, and would retain the greatest privilege of setting up that

---

<sup>74</sup> Maton, in particular, explicitly disapproves of the view that Gog and Magog referred to the Papacy or the Turks. In his opinion, Gog and Magog are an unknown, international diabolical force that will be drawn together in the future to do battle with the Saints. "Neither doe we reade that," he says, "that onely one particular Empire, or a few, or many Nations are comprehended by these words: but all the Nations ... who as they speedily, and at once, to be drawne together against the Saints, by the procurement of the Devill." See the discourse on "Gog and Magog" in Maton, *Israel's Redemption*, 126.

<sup>75</sup> Matar, *Islam in Britain*, 176-77; idem, "The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews," 118-119.

kingdom. As Shapiro and Guibbory have both pointed out, James I was less than thrilled with Finch's suggestion that the "kings of the Gentiles" would be subordinate to the restored Jews.<sup>76</sup> What makes these millenarians not only Restorationist but 'Judeo-centric' is their emphasis on the preeminent position of the restored Jewish nation in establishing the seat of Christ's kingdom in Jerusalem. The belief in a global messianic age ruled by the godliest people on earth is certainly an imperialist fantasy. For these Judeo-centric millenarians, however, although Christ's millennial dominion included the English members of the godly party, it was not to be an English empire. The empire would belong to Christ and to the godly. After their national conversion, the Jews would be first and foremost among the godly, and would receive their promised place at the centre of the world.

Moreover, for some of the more radically philo-semitic or Judeo-centric millenarians, it is hard to think of this as a strictly 'Protestant' empire. According to Popkin, John Dury was once asked whether it was possible to faithfully follow the Law of Moses and believe in Christ as the Messiah, and he answered in the affirmative.<sup>77</sup> Van der Wall has argued that both Jessey and Serrarius believed that the Saints would practice some form of Judeo-Christian religion in the coming millennium.<sup>78</sup> The Seventh-Day Sabbatarianism of Jessey, Tillam, Spittlehouse and Saller can partly be seen as a step toward achieving this millennial 'Jewish Christianity,' which was more likely than conventional Protestantism to attract the Jews to Christ. It can even be seen as a kind of pre-millennial ecumenical effort to unify the godly.

The bulk of the Jewish nation, these English Christians believed, would eventually form a key component of Christ's party in the fight against the ungodly forces of Antichrist. Thus, they hoped that a kind of Jewish-Christian ecumenism between 'Judaizing' Christians and 'Christian Jews' would hasten the unity of this

---

<sup>76</sup> Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 179; Guibbory, *Christian Identity*, 45.

<sup>77</sup> R. H. Popkin, "Skepticism about Religion and Millenarian Dogmatism: Two Sources of Toleration in the Seventeenth Century," in *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment*, edited by J. C. Laursen and C. J. Nederman (Philadelphia, 1998), 245.

<sup>78</sup> Van der Wall, "A Philo-Semitic Millenarian," 184; idem, "Petrus Serrarius and Menasseh ben Israel," 180.

godly party. This is precisely why Judaizing millenarians like Thomas Tillam exhibited such an “exaggerated hankering after Jews,” as Katz puts it.<sup>79</sup> It is also the reason that the emergence of Rabbi Nathan Shapira gave rise to such unbridled optimism from Dury, Jessey and Serrarius. Dury, the consummate ecumenist seeking to unify the godly party, and Jessey, perhaps the most respected philo-Judaic English divine of the 1650s, were not just seeking to convert Jews to Christianity; they were looking for signs that the Jews were becoming ready to reciprocate their own interest in Jewish-Christian reconciliation, hoping that God’s providence was preparing the way for the ultimate unification of the godly. In this scenario, not only does Jewish national difference survive the conversion to Christianity, but some of the elements of the Jewish religion potentially do as well.

This differs strongly from the goals of non-millenarian conversionists. A wide range of British Protestants, including William Laud, the toleration advocates John Weemse and Edward Spencer, and even the ‘loving’ Quaker Margaret Fell, showed little interest in this Judeo-centric eschatology. While they did look forward to the conversion of the Jews, they believed that this conversion would simply eradicate Jewish difference, because the Jews would become members of the only Israel that mattered, ‘spiritual’ Israel, as Christ brought Jews and Gentiles together into one sheepfold. There is thus some truth in Matar’s contention that the first truly ‘tolerant’ views of Jews in early modern England are those that were not so explicitly conversionist, and these came from the anti-Restorationist camp from the 1660s onward.<sup>80</sup> In a sense, this is because the Judeo-centric millenarians were not after ‘tolerance’ at all. As Katz has observed, what people like Henry Jessey sought was “a living religious unity rather than indifferent religious toleration in the modern sense.”<sup>81</sup> In retrospect, this seems an unlikely thing to ask of the Jewish émigrés, but the millenarians managed to find signs which gave them cause for hope.

---

<sup>79</sup> Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism*, 46. Katz is referring to the humiliation Tillam suffered in 1653 after converting a ‘false Jew’ who was revealed to be a Scottish Jesuit agent. See pp. 22-33.

<sup>80</sup> Matar, “The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews,” 123.

<sup>81</sup> Katz, “Henry Jessey and the Jews,” 137.



I have argued in this chapter that some English Christians suggested that the Jews, along with the Lost Tribes, retained a special national relationship with the Almighty that even Christ would not abrogate. On the eve of the millennium, they believed that this special status, which had been suspended since the first century, would shortly be re-affirmed in Christ's kingdom itself, which meant that some form of Jewish difference would not be completely superseded by the Gospel, but would instead be celebrated as a part of the truest Christian religion. It should be noted that not all 'Judeo-centric' or 'Restorationist' millenarians were supportive of Jewish readmission to England. Those who were, like Jessey, Dury and Collier, were hoping for the blessings that would come to the English godly if they were to be used as God's instruments in uniting Christ's party for the coming confrontation with the forces of Antichrist. Perhaps they hoped that they could establish a union of converted Jews and Gentile Saints in England that would serve as the first step towards that ultimate godly unity to be achieved later in Jerusalem, when the Saints and converted Jews would stand together at Christ's side in the millennial kingdom.

One wonders whether this 'philo-semitism' was not actually so extraordinary given other trends in early modern western Christianity. The early modern period in general, and the seventeenth century in particular, gave rise to a host of national messianisms across Europe, in both Catholic and Protestant countries, and Protestant England was no exception.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the predestinarian theology which dominated English Puritanism in this period accustomed many to what one might call an almost particularist understanding of Christian salvation (although not usually a national one), whereby God has bestowed his eternal and unchanging favour upon a predetermined elect who are fundamentally different from the unregenerate masses. It is misleading to suggest that those writers who adhered to the "Judeo-centric" form of millenarianism were potentially more 'tolerant' of Jewish difference than other English Christians. It is easier to 'tolerate' difference if one believes that this difference has been eternally

---

<sup>82</sup> R. H. Popkin, "Jewish-Christian Relations in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Conception of the Messiah," *Jewish History* 6.1/2 (1992), 163-177.

ordained by God, and will serve a special future purpose. Any difference that serves God's ultimate purpose can become 'tolerable' from a theological point of view.

## Conclusion

Herbert Thorndike, an Anglican theologian and Canon of Westminster Abbey after the Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy in 1660, wrote in 1670 that

men may amuse themselves, with the instance of the United Provinces; which, they say, flourish in trade and riches, by maintaining all Religions. But the question is of Religion, not of Trade, nor Riches. If it could be said, that their Religion is improved, with their Trade, the example were considerable. But, they that would restore and improve the Religion ... must not take up with the base Alloy of that which is seen in the United Provinces. Nor is this a reproach to them, but a truth of Gods Word; that Religion and Trade cannot be both at once at the height.<sup>1</sup>

After the Restoration, economic arguments advocating religious toleration for groups outside the Church of England became more common. The prosperous Dutch Provinces were increasingly cited by tolerationists as a positive example to follow, while the declining power of Spain was used as an ‘object lesson’ in the damaging economic effects of persecution.<sup>2</sup> But for many, like Thorndike and others, the question of toleration was primarily one “of Religion, not of Trade, nor Riches.” Commerce was well and good, but the loss of the true religion in favour of a ‘base Alloy’ was too high a price to pay for prosperity. Tolerationists, however, did not share Thorndike’s assumption that any religious pluralism was inherently destructive of true religion. The central purpose of this thesis has been to show that proponents of toleration, for a variety of reasons, argued that Christian religion itself would benefit from the kind of toleration they endorsed, because the differences that they wished to tolerate were godly ones.

After 1660, the arguments for tolerating Jews in England seem to have become primarily economic. The godly hope for Jewish conversion to Christianity did not, of course, disappear with the emergence of an openly practicing Jewish community in England, tacitly approved by Cromwell in 1656 and made official

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Thorndike, *A discourse of the forebearance or the penalties which a due Reformation requires* (London, 1670), 165-66.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, “The ‘Rise of Puritanism’ and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571-1719,” in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, edited by Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford, 1991), 34. Tyacke cites works by Slingsby Bethell (1671), Col. John Birch (1668, 1673) and Sir William Temple (1673).

in 1664 and 1674. The idea of the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine did not go away, and neither did millenarian eschatology.<sup>3</sup> But the role that these ideas played in proposals for Jewish toleration faded after the failure of the millennium to appear. Still, in John Coffey's view, it is noteworthy that although the Jews did not convert, the "millenarians did not turn against them."<sup>4</sup> It should be emphasized that John Dury and Henry Jessey were not just idle dreamers, but attempted to play an active role in bringing Jews to England. Menasseh ben Israel's trip to London and petition for toleration came only after of years of correspondence and coordination with Dury, who worked in Oliver Cromwell's foreign service.<sup>5</sup> This petition led to the Whitehall Conference in December 1655, at which Jessey was one of a select group of delegates. It should also be emphasized, however, that the Conference was inconclusive, and Menasseh's petition was therefore not successful, which is why the Jewish community of London received only a quiet and unofficial toleration (something like an amnesty) from Cromwell after throwing themselves upon his mercy.<sup>6</sup>

Charles II continued unflinchingly with this policy despite the protestations of some vocal English merchants. The later Stuart monarchs and Parliaments frequently made efforts to exploit the Jewish community through extra levies, taxes or tariffs whenever a boost of revenue was needed. As Alexandra Walsham has shown, this policy was similar to that which Charles I and the Civil War Parliament had employed against Catholics. The Crown increasingly came to depend on these extra sources of revenue and therefore had a vested interest in preserving the minority groups that paid them. "Members of

---

<sup>3</sup> Nabil Matar, "The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1661-1701," In *The Harvard Theological Review* 78.1/2 (1985), 115-148; Warren Johnston, "'Thomas Beverley and the 'Late Great Revolution': English Apocalyptic Expectation in the Late Seventeenth Century," in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Aldershot, 2007), 158-175.

<sup>4</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow, 2000), 157.

<sup>5</sup> Katz, *Philo-semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982), 151, 160. It is important to note, however, that the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam had its own reasons for seeking a formal toleration in England, and the rabbi must be seen as acting, however unofficially, on their behalf. See J. I. Israel, "Menasseh ben Israel and the Dutch Sephardic Colonization Movement of the Mid-Seventeenth Century (1645-1657)," in *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin (Leiden, 1989), 139-163.

minority churches and sects,” she notes, “were effectively able ... to pay for the privilege of their own toleration.”<sup>7</sup>

This kind of pragmatically exploitative toleration can be seen as ‘tolerant’ or ‘intolerant’ depending upon one’s perspective. It illustrates Walsham’s suggestion that tolerance and intolerance are opposite sides of the same coin. The usefulness of Jewish or stranger Protestant money was desirable, but so was the conversion and integration of either group into the English state and church. The system of extorting money from religious minorities allowed the Crown to ostensibly pursue both goals, and to reap the benefits of both tolerance (economic gain) and intolerance (maintaining a unified confessional state) without encountering the perceived dangers of either extreme. Too much tolerance would result in a factional, disunited, centrifugal state; too much coercion might encourage political sedition or chase away lucrative skills and capital.

The question of what constituted the truest Christian religion, however, most certainly did not disappear from the toleration and comprehension debates of the Restoration period. I have argued that the Civil War tolerationists William Walwyn, John Goodwin, Jeremy Taylor, Henry Robinson and John Milton argued for a certain kind of toleration premised upon a particular understanding of the nature of true religion. They espoused a theology which recognized no infallible authority other than the Bible, and thus emphasized individual industry in the search for religious truth through the use of critical ‘reason,’ but also emphasized the sceptical recognition of the limits of that reason. This theology laid the ground for an ideal of the true Church based on moral conduct and a common process for finding truth, rather than a common profession of it. A church which claims to be both rationalist and sceptical of rationality, however, must rely on toleration for the differing abilities of understanding among its membership. It is a church where unity is achieved through method and morality more than through doctrinal consensus and common ritual worship – where the means justify the end.

---

<sup>6</sup> Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1964), 164-166.

<sup>7</sup> A. Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), 86, 259; D.S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England: 1485-1850* (Oxford, 1994), 140-43, 162-189.

The problem with this ideal, as I mentioned in the second chapter, was that even if opposing parties accepted the centrality of ‘reason’ to true religion, their disagreement was not resolved, but only displaced, as they used the language of ‘reasonableness’ to make rhetorical gestures toward unity and ecumenism while at the same time dismissing their opponents as ‘unreasonable.’ Simply put, they disagreed over whether a belief or practice could be accounted ‘reasonable.’ The Cambridge Platonist Henry More argued toward the end of the 1650s that it was the rational approach to religion that mattered principally, not the doctrine itself, and that every doctrine arrived at ‘reasonably’ could be comprehended by an inclusive and episcopal national church. Yet this would refuse toleration to Jews, atheists, ‘enthusiasts’ or even Presbyterians, because by More’s definition, they were not guided by reason.<sup>8</sup> As John Spurr has noted, the debate over ‘rational’ religion in Restoration England became “a many-sided contest for possession of that protean term ‘reason,’ with all of the contestants claiming that they, and possibly only they, knew what was a ‘rational’ religion.”<sup>9</sup>

The Anglican latitudinarians, including the influential bishops Edward Stillingfleet, John Tillotson and Edward Fowler, drew on Richard Hooker’s interrelated concepts of reason and authority, which I outlined in chapter two. As Martin Griffin has shown, however, the single most influential work of theology for the latitudinarian position in the Restoration was William Chillingworth’s *The Religion of Protestants*. Latitudinarian theology, appealing as it did to Scripture, Reason, and ‘mitigated scepticism,’ was designed to be “an impregnable buttress of Protestantism” which would defend the true religion not only against Roman Catholic controversialists, as Chillingworth had tried to do, but also against the rational excesses of ‘Hobbism’ and Deism, as well as the dangerously irrational

---

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Hutton, “Iconisms, Enthusiasm and Origen: Henry More Reads the Bible,” in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Aldershot, 2007), 192-196; A. P. Coudert. “Henry More, the Kabbalah, and the Quakers,” in *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin (Cambridge, 1992), 58.

<sup>9</sup> John Spurr, “Rational Religion in Restoration England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49:4 (1988), 563.

‘enthusiasts.’<sup>10</sup> Stillingfleet referred to faith as “a rational and discursive act of the mind” because it was an “assent upon evidence,” while Tillotson’s sermons were saturated with the language of ‘reasonableness.’<sup>11</sup>

As Griffin points out, however, the latitudinarians largely invoked ‘reason’ only “to demonstrate what they already assumed to be certain.”<sup>12</sup> While Tillotson asserted the liberty of individual Christians to exercise individual religious judgment, this was, as with the example of Henry More above, only possible within the context of ‘submission and deference’ to the state Church. Richard Ashcraft has argued that the latitudinarians “invariably assumed the ‘reasonableness’ of the hierarchy of the Anglican Church.” Fowler and Joseph Glanvill declared that reason and dissent were fundamentally incompatible, which meant that any uncompromising nonconformist must necessarily be ‘unreasonable.’ By claiming a monopoly on ‘reasonableness,’ the latitudinarians presented themselves as moderates but actually constituted, in Ashcraft’s view, “the acceptable face of the persecution of religious dissent.”<sup>13</sup> This is perhaps an overstatement which overlooks the genuine efforts of Tillotson and Stillingfleet to meet with moderate nonconformists and discuss the possibility of a new and comprehensive church settlement, despite the objections of the Cavalier Parliament, in the 1660s and 70s.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Ashcraft provides an important counterpoint to a historiography which tends to celebrate the tolerant attitude of the ‘latitude-men’ within a national Church, while ignoring their support for the continued persecution of dissenters.

In response to Anglican claims that separating dissenters were ‘unreasonable,’ a number of Restoration nonconformists, including Samuel Rolle

---

<sup>10</sup> M.I.J. Griffin, Jr, *Latitudinarianism is the Seventeenth-century Church of England*, annotated by R. H. Popkin, edited by L. Freedman (Leiden, 1992), 88-91; M. Heyd, ‘Be Sober and Reasonable’: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995), 175-81, 189-90; R. L. Emerson, “Latitudinarianism and the English Deists,” in *Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment*, edited by J. A. Leo Lemay (Newark, 1987), 26-28.

<sup>11</sup> Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 60, 72.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Ashcraft, “Latitudinarianism and toleration: historical myth versus political history,” in *Philosophy, science and religion in England*, 154-155, 157-160, 164-65.

<sup>14</sup> John Marshall, “John Locke and latitudinarianism,” in *Philosophy, science and religion in England*, 258.

and Richard Baxter, published works of rational theology to defend the ‘reasonableness’ of nonconformity. These works often used similar arguments to those of the latitudinarians, stressing the importance of reason and portraying their position as a *via media* between Popery and ‘enthusiasm.’<sup>15</sup> Baxter considered himself a crusader for Christian unity, hoping for a comprehensive and decentralized national church which could accommodate a wide range of consciences. He defended most nonconformist views and especially stressed a pastor’s right to exercise complete liturgical freedom within his congregation, but he also condemned anyone he deemed responsible for schism in the Church, including Baptists, Separatists and the Independent gathered churches. “I am against all Sects and dividing Parties,” he insisted, identifying himself as “a CHRISTIAN, a MEER CHRISTIAN, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible where ever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible.”<sup>16</sup>

Instructing his students to avoid controversies, Baxter suggested that they consult a broad array of ecumenical works, including some by Acontius, Grotius, Stillingfleet and Jeremy Taylor, as well as Chillingworth’s *The Religion of Protestants* (1638) and John Goodwin’s *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures Asserted* (1647). Baxter was also happy to cite Richard Hooker on the subject of reason and faith. Like the latitudinarians, Baxter claimed that faith was “a rational Act of a rational Creature.” To subscribe to a faith which lacked reason, he argued, was degrading to humanity’s rational nature. Thus, as N.H. Keeble explains,

---

<sup>15</sup> Ashcraft, “Latitudinarianism and toleration,” 160-162.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Baxter, *Church-history of the government of bishops and their councils abbreviated* (London, 1680), sig. b. Several of Baxter’s own contemporaries struggled to determine his allegiances with precision, leading to the neologism ‘Baxterianism.’ In a 1681 work, he even referred to himself as an “*Episcopal-Presbyterian-Independent*.” As a Reformed theologian deeply concerned with pastor’s rights, he was sympathetic to the Independents, but his loathing for schism led him to write against them, as he explained in 1696: “If they would have taken parish-churches on independent principles, WITHOUT SEPARATION, neither I nor my acquaintance did oppose them ... We never denied the Independents the liberty of preaching lectures as often as they would; nor yet the liberty of taking parish-churches.” See A. H. Wood, *Church Unity without Uniformity: A Study of Seventeenth-century English Church Movements and of Richard Baxter’s Proposals for a Comprehensive Church* (London, 1963), 13-19, 40-47; as well as N.H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), 22-28.



Baxter “warred unceasingly against unreasoning fanaticism and enthusiasm.”<sup>17</sup> Here is yet another indication of the broad scope of Hooker and Chillingworth’s presence in seventeenth-century English thought, and further evidence that what Trevor-Roper calls the ‘wide Socinian’ tradition (see chapter two above) extended well beyond the ‘liberal Anglican’ position in this period. In some respects, as H. Reventlow has noted, Puritan and Anglican theology experienced ‘reciprocal interpenetration’ in the latter half of the seventeenth century, particularly with regard to an increased emphasis on ‘reason’ and morality.<sup>18</sup> Like his latitudinarian opponents, Baxter was opposed to toleration outside the state Church, favouring instead a broad measure of comprehension or ‘latitude’ within it. Differing Christian consciences and practices could be ‘comprehended’ as long as they reflected man’s ‘rational’ nature. Unlike the latitudinarians, however, church unity for Baxter did not mean uniformity; pastors would be allowed to run their parish churches as they saw fit.

It was within the context of these debates on the relationships between reason, faith and church authority that John Locke developed both *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) and his less famous work *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Locke may have been a heterodox thinker and an advocate of toleration, but he was also a life-long member of the Church of England, and was buried in Anglican communion. Locke was well-acquainted with a number of latitudinarians and described the Archbishop John Tillotson as one of his closest friends, whom he consulted on theological questions.<sup>19</sup> ‘Reasonableness,’ as noted above, was one of Tillotson’s favourite catchwords. Locke was also friends with the Dutch Remonstrant Philip van Limborch, and was familiar with the work of van Limborch’s great-uncle, the tolerationist theologian Simon Episcopius. And, of course, Locke shared the latitudinarians’ admiration for Chillingworth’s *The Religion of Protestants*, re-reading it multiple times in the 1680s and 90s. Locke

---

<sup>17</sup> Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 30-32, 39, 194n67-79; Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 2003) 84-85; Richard Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest* (London, 1650), 176.

<sup>18</sup> Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia, 1985), 152-53. Reventlow ascribes this to the legacy of Christian humanism.

was also familiar with Jeremy Taylor's *The Liberty of Prophesying*, and did not deny a contemporary's charge that there was a similarity between the argument in his *Reasonableness* and Taylor's earlier work.<sup>20</sup>

Locke's argument for toleration is, in many respects, very similar to those from earlier in the century examined in the first and second chapters. In the opening pages of *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, he explains that the core of the true Christian religion should be sought in moral virtue, piety, love and charity. Locke sounds not only like Taylor, but also like William Walwyn, when he declares that those who build the true church should focus their ire on immoral behaviour, which is far worse than sectarianism. Locke finds it hard to believe that anyone would desire to create a Church composed of coerced professors, and wonders if supporters of religious coercion "do not really contend for the Advancement of the true Religion, and of the Church of Christ" because they "make use of arms that do not belong to Christian warfare." In this, Locke rehearses the arguments of earlier tolerationists – not only Taylor, Goodwin, Robinson, Milton and Walwyn, but also Castellio, Acontius and Simon Episcopius – almost verbatim. Church leaders, he says, should follow the example of Christ and the Apostles, who subdued and gathered nations "not armed with the Sword, or other Instruments of Force, but prepared with the Gospel of Peace," because the weapons of Christianity are spiritual, not carnal, and a true church will not be composed of hypocrites. He affirms the importance of "teaching, instructing, and redressing the erroneous by Reason," which is the "greatest duty of a Christian," but adds that "it is one thing to perswade, another to command; one thing to press with Arguments, another with Penalties."<sup>21</sup>

As with the tolerationists examined in chapter two, Locke's toleration is articulated within a labour-intensive and deeply individualistic Protestantism. "Every man," he writes, "ought sincerely to enquire into himself, and by

---

<sup>19</sup> John Marshall, *John Locke: resistance, religion and responsibility* (Cambridge, 1994), 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> Marshall. "John Locke and latitudinarianism," 253-264; J. C. Higgins-Biddle, Introduction to *The Reasonableness of Christianity, As Delivered in the Scriptures*, by John Locke (Oxford, 1999), xxxiii, xxxviii, lvi-lviii, lxii, lxiv; R. R. Orr, *Reason and Authority: The thought of William Chillingworth* (Oxford, 1967), 178.

<sup>21</sup> John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (London, 1689), 1-5, 8, 41.

Meditation, Study, Search, and his own Endeavours.” Salvation is the highest Good to be sought, higher than any earthly goods. The immortal soul is capable of eternal happiness or misery depending on receiving God’s favour by doing and believing those things He has prescribed. Therefore, “the observance of these things is the highest Obligation that lies upon Mankind, and that our utmost Care, Application, and Diligence, ought to be exercised in the Search and Performance of them.”<sup>22</sup> As John Marshall has noted, Locke followed Chillingworth and latitudinarians like Fowler (as well as Taylor and the other tolerationists in chapter two) in suggesting that the “industrious search for the truth of scripture prevented sinful errors.” The *Essay on Human Understanding* attacks those who hold an ‘implicit faith’ in the opinions of others with a venom that recalls Goodwin or Milton (or Bacon). In his biblical commentaries, Locke uses the language of painstaking labour and industry to describe the act of Bible-reading, a common motif for both Puritan and Anglican writers in the seventeenth century, including the Civil War tolerationists, as noted above in the second chapter.<sup>23</sup>

Locke, however, strays from the conventional latitudinarian position by recommending toleration for those outside of the national church. Although Locke in no way shares Roger Williams’s position in its entirety, he follows Williams in characterizing churches as completely voluntary societies whose jurisdiction does not overlap with that of the Civil Magistrate. Also like Williams, he puts forward a kind of ‘harm principle,’ arguing repeatedly that one man’s disbelief “does no injury” to his neighbour, and that a heretic retains his “Rights and Franchises” regardless of his Church or religion, whether Christian or Pagan.<sup>24</sup> Locke’s position, then, is unusual in that he not only hopes for an especially broad and inclusive Church of England, as the latitudinarians and Baxter did, but he also conceives of that Church, and all other churches, as essentially voluntary societies designed primarily to further the salvation of those who are prepared to live

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 23, 41.

<sup>23</sup> Marshall, “John Locke and latitudinarianism,” 259-264; J. Champion, “‘Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures’: Biblical Criticism, Clerical Learning and Lay Readers, c. 1650-1720,” in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by A. Hessayon and N. Keene (Aldershot, 2007), 224-25; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690), 34-35.

upright lives and labour for the faith, regardless of the conclusions they reach by their labours – unless they become Roman Catholics or atheists, both of whom are inherently untrustworthy.

In my view, when Locke refers to toleration as “the chief Characteristical Mark of the True Church,” he is arguing that the real unity of the True Church comes only from a shared methodological and moral basis for the Christian religion. The Church of England will come closest to imitating the True Church only if, paradoxically, it allows individual English Christians to pursue salvation in other churches, because the basic unit of the True Church is the ‘conscientious man’ identified in my second chapter, and the unity of these ‘conscientious men’ must be a spiritual unity, not merely a carnal one. Locke’s position is, of course, not identical to that of Chillingworth, Taylor, Goodwin, Robinson, Walwyn or Milton. His argument belongs within a different political context, and he goes further than the others, although not as far as Williams, in his attempt to rigidly separate the jurisdictions of the Civil and Church governments. But like the Civil War tolerationists, Locke’s argument for toleration only makes sense within a particular understanding of what makes the best and most ‘conscientious’ Christian: someone whose faith is grounded in Scripture, ‘Reason,’ individual labour, and moral conduct.

\*

In a recent work, Wendy Brown argues that modern liberal invocation of ‘tolerance,’ as a moral and political ideal, reduces social conflict between groups to “inherent friction among identities.” Tolerance discourse naturalizes difference as a site of inevitable conflict between essentialized identities. The idealizing of tolerance, as a solution to this conflict, abandons “the project of connections across differences,” and confirms our social isolation from one another as the product of essential and irreducible difference. The notion of ‘culture’, in particular, is essentialized; it is reduced to an unwieldy ahistorical power which can explain the motives of ‘Them’, but not ‘Us.’ Culture is held to be something oppressive and dangerous unless mastered and restrained by liberalism, which is held to be a set of

---

<sup>24</sup> Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 14-15, 40.

universal (non-cultural) human principles. Brown, however, denies this purported universality, and insists that “liberalism is cultural.”<sup>25</sup>

If liberalism is cultural, then the toleration theology of early modern England is part of the cultural heritage of liberalism, whether seen through a Whiggish teleology or not. The language of ‘reasonableness,’ such a prominent part of the debate about the English Church in the latter half of the seventeenth century, has retained a place in post-Enlightenment liberalism. John Rawls, for example, attempts to lay the ground for “toleration in a society marked by reasonable pluralism.” For Rawls, a shared ‘reasonableness’ grants reciprocal moral legitimacy to rival points of view and provides the basis for a mutually tolerant coexistence. Political liberals, he writes, can remain firmly committed to their own beliefs, but should recognize the “practical impossibility” of reaching full agreement on ‘comprehensive doctrines.’<sup>26</sup> While I do not wish to obscure the important differences between what Rawls, Locke or even Kant call ‘reason,’ the notion of a toleration based on ‘reasonable pluralism’ suggests that while the *meaning* of the word ‘reason’ has undergone transformations, modern liberals still look back to previous centuries when evaluating the proper *function* of reason in society. This also helps to explain why early modern tolerationists and natural rights thinkers like the Levellers continue to fascinate modern historians in spite of the different interpretations of ‘reason’ that have come between them from us.

Brown’s reflections on tolerance can also stimulate discussion regarding early modern tolerationists. For example, John Milton’s argument for toleration comes partly from his belief that error, if arrived at through proper means (Scripture and individual reason), is not heresy. For Milton, the only heresy is the product of ‘implicit faith’ in the authority of tradition or another person, which necessarily means that all Roman Catholics are heretics – either they do not labour enough for their faith, or they do not properly use their ‘reason’ in their labours. A Catholic’s religion must be either negligent or irrational because his religious methodology is wrong. By contrast, Milton cherishes the diversity of religious

---

<sup>25</sup> Wendy Brown, *Regulating aversion: tolerance in the age of identity and empire* (Princeton, 2006), 15, 20-22, 88-90.

<sup>26</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, 1993), 47-63.

opinions among eager Bible-reading Protestants. He likens truth to a streaming fountain, rather than a stagnant pond, and he compares the building of true religion to the building of the Temple out of complementary pieces of different shapes and sizes.<sup>27</sup> In his view, for Catholics to be tolerated, they would have to cease being Catholics at all, and become Protestants, because pure Reformed Protestantism was the only universal true religion, having added nothing to the pure Word of God.

Milton argues that any religion based on the ‘traditions of men,’ rather than the Word of God alone, is dangerous to true religion and to state security – thinking especially of Roman Catholics.<sup>28</sup> A Catholic who ‘masters’ his traditions by rejecting ‘implicit faith’ in the Roman Church simply becomes a Protestant. In a sense, this prefigures the modern liberal tendency, identified by Brown, to view unmastered ‘culture’ as dangerous, something which applies to ‘Them,’ but not ‘Us.’ The Catholics are held to be slaves to custom, while only Protestants have achieved true Christian liberty. In condemning religion based on ‘implicit faith’ while being unwilling to see his own strenuous form of rationalist Protestant Bibliolatry as a kind of custom (as Samuel Fisher noted), Milton resembles Brown’s modern liberal who does not recognize that liberalism, too, is a cultural phenomenon. Milton sees ‘true religion’ the same way modern liberals are inclined to view liberalism: as a universal which is open to all those who have true liberty and are not enslaved to custom. Loyalty to such ‘universal’ values, rather than being ‘mastered’ by one’s particular cultural traditions and potentially becoming a

---

<sup>27</sup> John Milton, *Areopagitica: a speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* (London, 1644), 26-32; idem, *Of Civil Power*, 21-23.

<sup>28</sup> John Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes* (London, 1659), 29, 35-36; idem, *Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best means may be us'd against the growth of Popery* (London, 1673), 5, 10-13. Andrew Hadfield puts it well: “for Milton Catholicism was a variety of customs and conventions rather than simply an institution.” See his essay “Milton and Catholicism,” in *Milton and Toleration*, edited by Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford, 2007), 186-199. For a concise overview of the problem of toleration for Catholics in early modern England, see A. F. Marotti, “The Intolerability of English Catholicism,” in *Writing and Religion in England, 1558-1689: Studies in Community-making and Cultural Memory*, edited by R. D. Sell and A. W. Johnson (Farnham, UK, 2009), 47-70. For a more thorough treatment of early modern English Protestant attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, see Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. chapters 1, 3 and 4.

sedition political threat, was demanded of early modern English Catholics or Jews in much the same way as it is demanded of Muslims in western nations today.

Finally, what of Brown's suggestion that tolerance discourse does not encourage mutual respect and understanding, but rather naturalizes difference as an inevitable site of conflict which must then be remedied by tolerance? One might argue that there were a number of attempts at 'connecting across differences' in early modern England. Radically philo-semitic millenarianism constituted one such ecumenical venture. The suggestion that true religion could be largely reduced to Scripture, individual reason and moral conduct, allowing room for substantial disagreement on doctrine and worship, represented another attempt to connect across differences. However, each of these schemes could only find positive (godly) value across a very narrow scope of differences, and still required a negative (ungodly) 'Other' against which to build unity through this positive diversity. Irenicists like John Dury typically sought to pit Protestant unity against the Papal or Turkish Antichrist, while latitudinarians, following Richard Hooker, generally imagined an inclusive and comprehensive national church which defined itself in opposition to the unreasonable 'enthusiasts' or 'schismatics'. Finally, millenarian philo-semitism, even in its most radical form (syncretists like Jessey, Serrarius), was still meant to unify the godly in preparation for the inevitable conflict with the servants of Antichrist. Moreover, even this unusually positive view of Jewish difference still required Jews to accept the Gospel. Thus, it still resembled other Christian conversionist attitudes toward Jews in that it was based upon seeing Jews not as mere Jews, but also as Christians-in-waiting.

While never completely abandoned (ecumenism and Christian philo-semitism still exist today), perhaps the limits of these efforts in the seventeenth century ultimately helped to enshrine a more disinterested form of toleration as the most pragmatic solution to the problem of religious difference in early modern England. In this sense, the voice from the 1640s and 50s that speaks the language of modern tolerance is that of Roger Williams, whose high Calvinist theology and separatist ecclesiology help him to completely sever the connection between a

civil society and a godly one. While the other mid-seventeenth-century English tolerationists are unusual in their willingness to significantly modify the criteria for membership in a godly society, Williams the radical separatist is even more unusual in his willingness to consign society at large to a prosperous ungodliness. The other tolerationists argue that a godly society can accept those differences that are at least potentially godly ones. Williams, instead, envisions an ungodly society that can tolerate unmistakably ungodly differences. In his view, the bulk of civil society is essentially unredeemable, but the mundane evils of this massive reprobate can pose no real threat to the true Saints. This means, however, that there is no reason at all to 'connect across differences' because the difference between the godly and the unregenerate is fundamental and absolute – it is an unbridgeable chasm. Williams, therefore, recommends a pragmatic form of civil coexistence which nonetheless reinforces social isolation from those who are irreducibly different. It allows one to be on civil, even friendly terms with one's neighbour during the day, and then sleep peacefully with the confidence that the same neighbour, if God so wills, is destined to suffer eternal punishment at the end of days.



## Bibliography

### I. Printed Primary Sources

- Chillingworth, William. *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation*. Oxford, 1638. Reproduced by The Scholar Press, 1972.
- Milton, John. "Christian Doctrine." In *Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol. VI*, edited by Don M. Wolfe. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Taylor, Jeremy. *A Discourse of The Liberty of Prophesying*. London, 1647. Reproduced by The Scholar Press, 1971.
- Walwyn, William. *The Writings of William Walwyn*, edited by Jack R. McMichael and Barbara Taft. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989.

### II. Primary Sources from the Early English Books Online Database. Accessed through the University of Alberta Library.

- Acontius, Jacobus. *Satan's Strategems, or the Devils Cabinet-Council Discovered*. London, 1648. Accessed 22 April 2011.
- An information, concerning the present state of the Jewish nation in Europe and Judea. Wherein the footsteps of Providence preparing a way for their conversion to Christ, and for their deliverance from captivity, are discovered*. London, 1658. Accessed 29 August 2011.
- Archer, John. *The personall reigne of Christ upon earth in a treatise wherein is fully and largely laid open and proved that Jesus Christ, together with the saints, shall visibly possesse a monarchicall state and kingdome in this world*. London, 1642. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- A[spinwall], W[illiam]. *The legislative power is Christ's peculiar prerogative*. London, 1656. Accessed 29 August 2011.
- Baxter, Richard, *The saints everlasting rest*. London, 1650. Accessed 25 October 2011.
- . *Church-history of the government of bishops and their councils abbreviated*. London, 1680. Accessed 25 October 2011.
- Ben Israel, Menasseh. *The Hope of Israel*. Translated by Moses Wall. London, 1650. Accessed 22 December 2010.

- Cary, Lucius. *His Discourse of Infallibility, with an answer to it, and his Lordships Reply*. London, 1651. Accessed 7 July 2011.
- Collier, Thomas. *The Day-Dawning and the Day-star arising to the dispersed of Judah and Israel. Wherein in briefly handled Their Call and Christs Second Coming, whose day is neer at hand*. London, 1655. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- [———]. *A brief answer to some of the objections and demurs made against the coming in and inhabiting of the Jews in this common-wealth*. London, 1655. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- Cotton, John. *An abstract of laws and government*. London, 1655. Accessed 29 August 2011.
- Dury, John. *A Case of Conscience; Whether it be lawful to admit Jews into a Christian common-wealth?* London, 1656. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- Eliot, John. *The Christian common-wealth or, The civil policy of the rising kingdom of Jesus Christ*. London, 1659. Accessed 27 August 2011.
- Fell, Margaret. *For Manasseth Ben Israel. The Call of the Jewes Out of Babylon*. London, 1656. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- . *A loving salutation to the seed of Abraham among the Jewes: where ever they are scattered up and down upon the face of the earth*. London, 1657. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- [Finch, Henry]. *The Calling of the Iewes. A Present to Iudah and the children of Israel that joynd with him, and to Ioseph, (the valiant tribe of Ephraim) and all the House of Israel , that joynd with him*. London, 1621. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- Goodwin, John. *Theomachia; or the grand impudence of men running the hazard of fighting against God*. London, 1644. Accessed 22 April 2011.
- [———]. *M.S. to A.S. With a Plea for Libertie of Conscience in a Church Way*. London, 1644. Accessed 22 April 2011.
- . *Hagiomastix, or the scourge of the Saints*. London, 1646. Accessed 22 April 2011.
- . *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures Asserted*. London, 1647. Accessed 22 April 2011.
- . *Sion-Colledg visited. Or, some briefe Animadversions upon a Pamphlet lately published*. London, 1647/8. Accessed 22 April 2011.

- . *Hybristodikai. The obstructours of justice. Or a defence of the honourable sentence passed upon the late King, by the High Court of Justice.* London, 1649. Accessed 22 April 2011.
- Helwys, Thomas. *A shorte declaration of the mistery of iniquity.* 1612. Accessed 19 October 2011.
- [Jacob, Henry]. *To the right high and mightie prince, Iames by the grace of God.* 1609. Accessed 19 October 2011.
- [Jessey, Henry]. *A narrative of the late proceedings at White-hall concerning the Jews.* London, 1656. Accessed 29 August 2011.
- Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration.* London, 1689. Accessed 15 October 2011.
- . *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* London, 1690. Accessed 20 October 2011.
- Maton, Robert. *Israel's redemption or the propheticall history of our Saviours kingdome on earth; that is, of the church Catholicke, and triumphant. With a discourse of Gog and Magog, or The battle of the great day of God almightie.* London, 1642. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- Milton, John. *Areopagitica: a speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing.* London, 1644. Accessed 18 September 2010.
- . *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes shewing that it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compell in matters of religion.* London, 1659. Accessed 24 April 2011.
- . *Of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best means may be us'd against the growth of Popery.* London, 1673. Accessed 24 April 2011.
- [Murton, John]. *A most humble supplication of many the Kings Maiesties loyall subiects.* 1621. Accessed 19 October 2011.
- Perkins, William. *Lectures vpon the three first chapters of the Reuelation.* London, 1604. Accessed 1 August 2011.
- Preston, John. *The New Covenant, or the Saint's Portion.* London, 1629. Accessed 1 August 2011.
- Prynne, William. *A short demurrer to the Jewes long discontinued barred remitter into England.* London, 1656. Accessed 29 August 2011.

- [Robinson, Henry]. *Liberty of Conscience: or the sole means to obtaine Peace and Truth*. London, 1643/44. Accessed 27 June 2011.
- [———]. *An Answer to Mr. William Prynne's Twelve Questions*. London, 1644. Accessed 27 June 2011.
- Saller, William. *Sundry queries formerly tendred to the ministers of London for clearing the doctrine of the Fourth Commandment and the Lord's Sabbath-day but now tendred to the consideration of all men*. London, 1660. Accessed 20 September 2011.
- Saller, William and John Spittlehouse. *An appeal to the consciences of the chief magistrates of this common-wealth, touching the Sabbath-Day*. London, 1657. Accessed 20 September 2011.
- S[pencer], E[dward]. *A Breife Epistle to the Learned Manasseh Ben Israel, in answer to his, Dedicated to the Parliament*. London, 1650. Accessed 22 May 2011.
- Spittlehouse, John. *Certaine queries propounded to the most serious consideration of those persons now in power*. London, 1654. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- Thorndike, Herbert. *A Discourse of the Forbearance or the Penalties Which a Due Reformation Requires*. London, 1670. Accessed 22 May 2011.
- Thorowgood, Thomas. *Ievves in America, or, Probabilities that the Americans are of that race*. London, 1650. Accessed 27 August 2011.
- Weemse, John. *A Treatise of the Fovre Degenerate Sonnes*. London, 1636. Accessed 21 August 2011.
- Williams, Roger. *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*. London, 1644. Accessed 5 July 2011.
- Winslow, Edward. *The Glorious progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England*. London, 1649. Accessed 27 August 2011.

### III. Secondary Sources

- Ashcraft, Richard. "Latitudinarianism and toleration: historical myth versus political history." In *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin, 151-177. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Benedict, Philip. "Un roi, une loi, deux fois: parameters for the history of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555-1685." In *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, 32-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Bietenholz, Peter G. *Encounters with a Radical Erasmus: Erasmus' work as a source of radical thought in early modern Europe*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Brown, Wendy. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Butterfield, Herbert. "Toleration in Early Modern Times." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38.4 (1977), 573-584.
- Campbell, Gordon and Thomas N. Corns. *John Milton : life, work, and thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Capp, B. S. *The Fifth Monarchy Men*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.
- Carlin, Norah. "Toleration for Catholics in the Puritan Revolution." In *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, 216-230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Champion, Justin. "'Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures': Biblical Criticism, Clerical Learning and Lay Readers, c. 1650-1720." In *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene, 208-230. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Clouse, R.G. "The Rebirth of Millenarianism." In *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600 to 1660*, edited by Peter Toon, 42-65. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1970.
- Coffey, John. "Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution." *The Historical Journal* 41.4 (1998), 961-985.
- . *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2000.

- . *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-century England*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2006.
- . “Scepticism, Dogmatism and Toleration in Seventeenth-Century England.” In *Persecution and pluralism: Calvinists and religious minorities in early modern Europe, 1550-1700*, edited by Richard Bonney and D.J.B. Trim, 149-176. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006.
- Cogley, Richard W. “The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Restoration of Israel in the ‘Judeo-Centric’ Strand of Puritan Millenarianism.” *Church History* 72.2 (2003), 304-332.
- . “The Ancestry of the American Indians: Thomas Thorowgood’s Jewes in America (1650) and Jews in America (1660).” *English Literary Renaissance* 35.2 (2005), 304-330.
- Connolly, Ruth. “‘A Wise and Godly Sybilla’: Viscountess Ranelagh and the Politics of International Protestantism.” In *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Sylvia Brown, 285-306. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Corns, Thomas N. “John Milton, Roger Williams and the Limits of Toleration.” In *Milton and Toleration*, edited by Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer, 72-85. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Coudert, Allison P. “Henry More, the Kabbalah, and the Quakers.” In *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin, 31-67. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Ellison, James. *George Sandys: Travel, Colonialism and Tolerance in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002.
- Emerson, Roger L. “Latitudinarianism and the English Deists.” In *Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment*, edited by J. A. Leo Lemay, 19-48. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987.
- Gardiner, S. R. *History of the Great Civil War, 1642-49*, 4 vols. London: Longman’s, 1901.
- Gibson, Kenneth. “John Dury’s Apocalyptic Thought: A Reassessment.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61.2 (2010), 299-313.

- Grell, Ole Peter, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds. *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Grell, Ole Peter and Bob Scribner, eds. *Tolerance and intolerance in the European Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Griffin, Martin I.J., Jr. *Latitudinarianism is the Seventeenth-century Church of England*. Annotated by Richard H. Popkin. Edited by Lila Freedman. Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- Guibbory, Achsah. "Conversation, Conversion, Messianic Redemption: Margaret Fell, Menasseh ben Israel, and the Jews." In *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, edited by Claude J. Summers and Ted Larry Pebworth, 210-234. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000.
- . *Christian Identity, Jews, and Israel in 17th-Century England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Henriques, H. S. Q. *The return of the Jews to England: being a chapter in the history of English law*. London, 1905.
- Hessayon, Ariel and Nicholas Keene (eds.). *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Haller, William. *Tracts on liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1647*, 3 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1934.
- Hanlon, Gregory. *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.
- Hadfield, Andrew. "Milton and Catholicism." In *Milton and Toleration*, edited by Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer, 186-199. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hart, A. Tindal. *Clergy and Society, 1600-1800*. London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1968.
- Heyd, Michael. *'Be Sober and Reasonable': The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Higgins-Biddle, John C. Introduction to *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, by John Locke, xv-cxv. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

- Hill, Christopher. *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1972.
- . *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*. London: Penguin, 1993.
- Huntley, Frank Livingstone. *Jeremy Taylor and the Great Rebellion: A Study of His Mind and Temper in Controversy*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1970.
- Hutton, Sarah. "Iconisms, Enthusiasm and Origen: Henry More Reads the Bible." In *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene, 192-207. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Hyamson, Albert M. *A History of the Jews in England*. London, 1908.
- Israel, Jonathan I. "Menasseh ben Israel and the Dutch Sephardic Colonization Movement of the Mid-Seventeenth Century (1645-1657)." In *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin, 139-163. Leiden: Brill, 1989.
- . "Toleration in Seventeenth-Century Dutch and English Thought." In *The Exchange of Ideas: Religion, Scholarship and Art in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Simon Groenveld and Michael Wintle, 13-30. Zutphen: Walburg Instituut, 1994.
- Johnston, Warren. "'Thomas Beverley and the 'Late Great Revolution': English Apocalyptic Expectation in the Late Seventeenth Century." In *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene, 158-175. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Jordan, W. K. *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, 4 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932-40.
- . *Men of Substance: a Study of the Thought of Two English Revolutionaries, Henry Parker and Henry Robinson*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942
- Kamen, Henry. *The Rise of Toleration*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.
- Kaplan, Yosef, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin, eds. *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World*. Brill: Leiden, 1989.
- Karp, Jonathan and Adam Sutcliffe, eds. *Philosemitism in History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.



- Katz, David S. *Philo-semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- . *Sabbath and sectarianism in seventeenth-century England*. Leiden: Brill, 1988.
- . “Menasseh ben Israel’s Christian Connection: Henry Jessey and the Jews.” In *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin, 117-138. Leiden: Brill, 1989.
- . *The Jews in the History of England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Keeble, N.H. *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Lake, Peter. *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988.
- Lecler, Joseph. *Toleration and the Reformation*, 2 vols. Translated by T. L. Westow. London: Longman’s, 1960.
- Laursen, John Christian and Cary J. Nederman, eds. *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.
- Levine, Alan, ed. *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999.
- Lim, Paul C.-H. “*Adiaphora*, Ecclesiology and Reformation: John Owen’s Theology of Religious Toleration in Context.” In *Persecution and pluralism: Calvinists and religious minorities in early modern Europe, 1550-1700*, edited by Richard Bonney and D.J.B. Trim, 243-272. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006.
- Marotti, Arthur F. “The Intolerability of English Catholicism.” In *Writing and Religion in England, 1558-1689: Studies in Community-making and Cultural Memory*, edited by Roger D. Sell and Anthony W. Johnson, 47-70. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009.
- Marshall, John. “John Locke and latitudinarianism.” In *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin, 253-282. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *John Locke: resistance, religion and responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

- Matar, Nabil. "The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1661-1701." In *The Harvard Theological Review* 78.1/2 (1985), 115-148.
- . *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- McDowell, Nicholas. *The Radical English Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.
- . "The Ghost in the Marble: Jeremy Taylor's Liberty of Prophecy (1647) and its Readers." In *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene, 176-191. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Milton, Anthony. *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- More, Ellen. "John Goodwin and the Origins of the New Arminianism." *The Journal of British Studies* 22:1 (1982), 50-70.
- Oberman, Heiko A. "The Travail of Tolerance: Containing Chaos in Early Modern Europe." In *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, 13-31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Orr, Robert R. *Reason and Authority: The thought of William Chillingworth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Pettegree, Andrew. "The politics of tolerance in the Free Netherlands." In *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, edited by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, 182-198. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Popkin, Richard H. "Jewish-Christian Relations in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Conception of the Messiah." *Jewish History* 6.1/2 (1992), 163-177.
- . "Christian Jews and Jewish Christians in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century." In *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, edited by Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner, 57-72. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994.

- . “Hartlib, Dury and the Jews.” In *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, edited by Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor, 118-136. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . “Skepticism about Religion and Millenarian Dogmatism: Two Sources of Toleration in the Seventeenth Century.” In *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment*, edited by John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman, 232-250. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.
- . *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Remer, Gary. *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration*. University Park, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- Reventlow, Henning Graf. *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Roth, Cecil, *A History of the Jews in England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Scult, Mel. *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties*. Leiden: Brill, 1978.
- Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Shuger, Debora Kuller. *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Spufford, Margaret, ed. *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995
- Spurr, John. “Rational Religion in Restoration England.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49:4 (1988), 563-585.
- Tadmor, Naomi. *The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society and Culture in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Toon, Peter, ed. *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600-1660*. Cambridge: James Clark, 1970.

- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. R. *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth-century Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- . *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Tuck, Richard. "Scepticism and Toleration in the Seventeenth Century." In *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, edited by Susan Mendus, 21-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Tulloch, John. *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*. Edinburgh, 1872.
- Tyacke, Nicholas. "The 'Rise of Puritanism' and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571-1719." In *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, edited by Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Underwood, T.L. "Early Quaker Eschatology." In *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600 to 1660*, edited by Peter Toon, 91-103. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1970.
- Van den Berg, J. and Ernestine G.E. van der Wall (eds.). *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988.
- Van der Wall, Ernestine G. E.. "Petrus Serrarius and Menasseh ben Israel: Christian Millenarianism and Jewish Messianism in Seventeenth-century Amsterdam." In *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin, 164-190. Leiden: Brill, 1989.
- . "A Philo-Semitic Millenarian on the Reconciliation of Jews and Christians: Henry Jessey and his 'The Glory and Salvation of Jehudah and Israel' (1650)." In *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, edited by David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel, 161-184. Leiden: Brill, 1990.
- Walsham, Alexandra. *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Williamson, Arthur H.. "British Israel and Roman Britain: The Jews and Scottish Models of Polity from George Buchanan to Samuel Rutherford." In *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, edited by Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner, 97-117. Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1994.

- Wolf, Lucien. "Cromwell's Jewish Intelligencers." In *Essays in Jewish History*, edited by Cecil Roth, 91-114. London, 1934.
- Wood, A. Harold. *Church Unity without Uniformity: A Study of Seventeenth-century English Church Movements and of Richard Baxter's Proposals for a Comprehensive Church*. London: The Epworth Press, 1963.
- Worden, Blair. "Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate." In *Persecution and Toleration, Studies in Church History 21*, edited by W. J. Sheils, 199-233. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.
- Zakai, Avihu. "Religious Toleration and Its Enemies: The Independent Divines and the Issue of Toleration during the English Civil War." *Albion* 21.1 (1989), 1-33.
- . "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition." In *Menasseh ben Israel and his World*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin, 31-44. Leiden: Brill, 1989.