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Community and Contention in Early Modern England

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Community and Contention in Early Modern England

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Comparative analysis of the impact of religion on liberal political development is hampered by the presumption of secularization in canonical works of historical institutionalism. The prevailing arguments about the origins of liberal political institutions either omit religion completely as a significant factor in political and social life, or presume unique compatibility between Protestant Christianity and liberal democracy. This project challenges both the assumption of secular modernity and Christian exceptionalism as preconditions of liberal political development by examining the debates about religious toleration in early modern England. The toleration debates provide a record of the ideas generated in response to state expansion, and demonstrate the critical role of religion in establishing the modern state as the primary frame of political power. They further illustrate the importance of religious narratives in justifying liberal political principles such as popular sovereignty and accountable government, as well as the fundamental rights to freedom of speech, the press, association and conscience.

Drawing upon original readings of pamphlets, newspapers and political tracts from the seventeenth century, I argue that religion promoted political transformation in early modern England not because of the specifics of doctrine or decline in its relevance to social and political life, but because it was the locus of individual experience of state power. The monarchy radically extended its scope and capacity by appropriating the institutional and symbolic resources of the church. It used the church to promote institutional and cultural regularity across the realm. The common experience of civil power through state regulation of religious practice led to the development of a collective interest in securing the right to religious worship that extended across class and regional divisions. The Protestant political identity cultivated by the monarchy in its campaign for religious uniformity created cultural opportunities for political resistance to the state's encroachment upon communal and individual autonomy. Competing interpretations of the meaning and requirements of this Protestant identity for individuals on one hand, and the requisites of political order and stability on the other, led to a public reconceptualization of the role of government and the rights and responsibilities of political membership.

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the study of ideas is almost entirely indebted to him. Both Jan and Gordon have enriched my life in innumerable ways as advisors and as friends. They have cultivated me as a scholar through endless hours of conversation and careful attention to my work. I cherish their respect and appreciate their openness and patience.

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Chapter Summaries

Chapter One : Introduction.....1

Chapter Two: Religious Dissent and The Origins of Liberalism.....20

Comparative historical analysis of political development has largely omitted religion from discussions of state development, nationalism, and various features of liberal political systems. This absence is a consequence of a parallel neglect of religion in historiography throughout much of the twentieth century, and the tendency within both history and political science to privilege economic causality in narratives of political change. Developments in the historiography of early modern England challenge the assumptions on which much analysis of the origins of liberal political institutions are based. They highlight the key role of religion in the extension of state capacity and establishment of the state as a focal point of political life. The chapter concludes by arguing that the centrality of religion to seventeenth century politics, rather than its absence, is the key to understanding the development of political pluralism and the origins of liberal principles of government.

Chapter Three: Forming a Protestant Nation (1531-1603).....78

The de-differentiation of religion and state and subsequent use of the church to project power into the localities and foster a uniform political culture in sixteenth century England were critical factors in the revolutionary challenges to monarchical power in the seventeenth century. Religion became the locus of conflict between the king and the people because it was the primary means through which people experienced state power. It provided the conditions of collective resistance by creating a common experience across class and regional divisions and a shared language and tradition of political resistance. Analysis of arguments about the relationship between church and state from this period challenge contemporary assertions that the Protestant “priesthood of all believers” led to democratic political ideas. The experience of conflict between religious and political obligation among early Protestants generated theories of political resistance but they did little to change the scholastic conception of the state as God’s surrogate on earth.

Chapter Four: From the Trew Monarchy to Insurrection.....135

The toleration debates from the beginning of James I’s reign to the eve of the English Revolution demonstrate the origins of what contemporary observers understand as liberal political ideas in conflict between the encroaching state and voluntaristic communities. The protestant identity cultivated under Elizabeth I created the conditions

for collective challenge to the crown's efforts to control its meaning and expression by mandating uniform religious practices. Common experience of religious oppression and interest in religious reform united people across class, sect, and region to challenge these policies as a violation of English birthright liberties. The discourses of resistance developed by the Marian exiles are revived and expanded to inform arguments for religious liberty; freedom of speech, the press and assembly; separation of church and state; engaged citizenship and progressive social change through individual action.

Chapter Five: The Revolutionary Years (1640-1660).....181

Religious narratives were critical to the reconceptualization of political authority during the English Revolution and Interregnum. Religion was a primary motivation in cross-class resistance to the king, and a critical factor in reconstituting political power. This period was characterized by a high degree of popular engagement with politics and radical upheaval of traditional roles. Political allegiances in the name of religious liberty break up in the face of opportunities for certain groups to institute their particular vision of the correct religion. Divine narratives provided the resources for pointed political critiques of social and political inequality, governmental corruption and the responsibilities of common people to bring about a just society. The problems of revelation as the basis of political legitimacy and the limits of 'truth' as a basis for collective life promote a discourse of the commonwealth as a frame for religious experience rather than an arbiter of beliefs.

Chapter Six: Restoration, Reconciliation and Renewed Repression.....230

The arguments for and against toleration changed significantly with the new institutional context of the Restoration, and the reestablishment of Anglican hegemony. The dominant Anglican discourse presented religious homogeneity as essential to social cohesion and political stability. This political argument for religious uniformity set the terms of the toleration debate largely in raison d'état rather than in the rights language employed during the revolutionary decades. The Act of Uniformity effectively established Anglican hegemony, and relegated dissenting groups – many of whom supported the idea of a state church – to an oppressed minority status. Protestant political identity and anti-Catholic rhetoric became powerful tools in challenging Anglican control over religion. Fear of Catholicism, and interest in preserving Protestant dominance ultimately motivate a coalition in support of limited religious toleration. Acceptance of religious pluralism comes about through the Anglican majority's recognition of the failure of coercion to create uniformity, and their desire for dissenters' support in restraining the power of the monarch.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....3

I will not weary of telling you all the good things I offer, so that you can never say that you, an elder god, were driven unfriended from the land by me in my youth, and by my mortal citizens. But if you hold Persuasion has her sacred place of worship in the sweet beguilement of my voice, then you might stay with us. But if you wish to stay then it would not be justice to inflict your rage upon this city, your resentment or bad luck to armies. Yours the baron's portion in this land if you will, in all justice, with full privilege.
Athene (Eumenides 885-891)

This is my prayer: Civil War fattening on men's ruin shall not thunder in our city. Let not the dry dust that drinks the black blood of citizens through passion for revenge and bloodshed for bloodshed be given our state to prey upon. Let them render grace for grace. Let love be their common will; let them hate with a single heart. Much wrong in the world thereby is healed.

Chorus (Eumenides 976-987)

"Are they taking thought to discover that road where speech goes straight? In the terror upon the faces of these I see great good for our citizens"

Athene (Chorus 988)

Introduction

The relationship between religion and liberal political development is problematic. Liberal political theorists tend to approach this question in terms of the requirements of liberal principles with respect to individual autonomy and religious pluralism. Generally speaking, the liberal answer is that religion is useful to public life, but only if it is sufficiently domesticated.¹ John Rawls, for example, recognizes the "moral capacities" of human beings that religion cultivates – the capacity for a sense of justice and a conception of the good – as the basis of liberal political equality. However, these same capacities can be a source of oppression if they inspire people to impose their

¹ Robert Putnam, for example, in his forthcoming book with David Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion is Reshaping Our Civic and Political Lives*, argues that religious people make better democratic citizens. Simon and Shuster (2010). Data supporting this claim was presented at a lecture to the Political Science Department, Rutgers New Brunswick in March 2007. His work is limited to the United States however, and his conclusions may not extend beyond that institutional context.

conception of the good on others. In the liberal view, the threats to religious autonomy are dual: the first danger is concentration of power in the state; the second is the evangelizing impulse of one's neighbors. As social organizations independent of the state, religions can be a resource for addressing the first problem. They facilitate collective action by providing a common ethical vision and organizational capacity to promote political accountability. Rawls sees "public reason" as a solution to the latter problem. Liberal democracies require people to cede comprehensive truth claims in favor of a procedurally established "reasonableness."²

Like most liberal political theorists, Rawls presumes the existence of the state. He is unconcerned with the evolution of the state's role in arbitrating truth claims to preserve individual autonomy and pluralism. The theorist's job is to prescribe and caution, rather than to assess causal impact or trace developmental processes. Nonetheless, because of the power of this tradition in defining liberal states, it has substantially influenced the way religion is conceptualized in comparative analysis of political development. Liberal theory articulates the balance of power between religion and politics necessary for a state to meet a liberal standard of justice. It posits an ideal arrangement intended to inform the actions of citizens and statesmen who embrace the principles on which it is based. This ideal, rather than its origins or the various stages of partial realization that characterize its historical evolution, is commonly the point of reference for political analysts considering the impact of religion on liberal political development.

² John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. (1993). Paul Ricoeur challenges Rawls' premise that a conception of "right" can be free of a conception of the good. Ricoeur argues that the "veil of ignorance," the procedure Rawls imagines for achieving a governing consensus, is not value neutral but reliant upon the idea of reciprocity. The golden rule, "Do unto others" is the fundamental conception of the good in Rawls' liberalism. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Just* (2000).

Comparative political analysis tends to reconstruct the impact of religion from an ideal that sustains the operation of liberal institutions in advanced democracies because of a lack of conceptual resources to consider religion as an independent factor in political development. The seminal works in historical institutionalism since the mid-twentieth century rarely mention religion (Moore 1966, Skocpol 1979, Tilly 1975, Anderson 1983). Economic and geopolitical factors predominate in explanations of the development of the modern state and liberal democracy. Where religion is considered, it is understood only as an intervening variable in these processes. Religion might reflect social unrest and structural shifts (Goldstone 1986) or enhance geopolitical competition (Hintz 1975, Downing 1992, Tilly 1992, Spruyt 1996), but at the outset the causal logic implicit in this mode of inquiry defines religion as epiphenomenal. In these explanations, religion is understood as attitudes, beliefs and values that are a consequence of other factors. More commonly, explanations assume that religion was a casualty of the process of modernization itself, and was thus a weak or insignificant force in social and political life by the early modern period. The institutional and disciplinary power of the church, the power of religion as the “knowledge culture” (Somers 1997) within which people understood their relationships to one another and to political power, and the relationship of both of these factors to the emergence of the state as the focal point of political authority are completely absent from the accounts of the historical emergence of the modern liberal state that predominate in political science.

This project seeks to put analysis of the relationship between religion and liberal political development on firmer ground by examining the debates about religious toleration in early modern England. The toleration debates chronicle the changes in

political membership and right throughout the process of state consolidation. They provide a record of the ideas generated in response to state expansion, and demonstrate the critical role of religion in the establishment of the modern state as the primary frame of political power. The English case is an important source of information about how and why the liberal balance between church and state came to be perceived as desirable, and the specific factors that facilitated the shift from religiously grounded political authority to popular sovereignty as the basis of a self-authorizing state.

In early modern England, the monarchy radically extended its scope and capacity by appropriating the institutional and symbolic resources of the church. The monarchy used the church strategically to project power and cultivate a shared political identity throughout the kingdom. The pulpit enabled the throne to communicate directly and simultaneously with people throughout the country, and the local authority and disciplinary oversight of the churches significantly extended the monarch's bureaucratic capacity. I will argue that this use of the church to build state power ultimately led to legal recognition of religious pluralism and liberal restraint of monarchical power. The effect of religion on political change in this context was neither specific to religious doctrine, nor a consequence of religion's decline as a structuring force in social life. Rather, the common experience of civil power through state regulation of religious practice led to the development of a collective interest in securing the right to religious worship that extended across social class and regional divisions. The Protestant political identity cultivated by the monarchy in its campaign for religious uniformity provided a shared language, stories and symbols, through which this common interest could be elaborated to mobilize people in resistance to the state's encroachment upon communal

and individual autonomy.

Pluralism is articulated as a political principle in seventeenth century England through popular contention in response to efforts to impose uniformity on spiritual practice. The Protestant political identity cultivated by Elizabeth I became a resource for community resistance to centralizing power, and individual claims to freedoms of speech, the press, association and liberty of conscience. The specifically Protestant doctrine Elizabeth I used to craft a common religious identity throughout England enabled people to challenge political legitimacy on its own terms. The voluntarism inherent in Protestant Christianity enabled people to embrace the idea of shared membership within a protestant nation, but interpret it differently. Competing interpretations of the meaning and requirements of this Protestant identity for individuals on one hand, and the requisites of political order and stability on the other, led to a public reconceptualization of the role of government and the rights and responsibilities of political membership.

The Teleological Eclipse of Religion

The omission of religion from comparative historical analysis of state development is a consequence of the histories that informed the initial forays of social scientists into the terrain of the past, and the metanarrative that shaped the concerns of both historians and social scientists. Neither group of scholars focused on religion as an active force in shaping “modernity” because it was by definition, an effect, rather than a cause of the process. Modernization theory, the dominant paradigm in the social sciences in the late 1950s and early 1960s, understood religion as a pillar of the old order that would decline in influence under the synergistic forces of industrialization, urbanization

and scientific rationalism. The theory rendered religion invisible, both by directing inquiry toward a defined set of economic “causes,” and by anticipating its obsolescence. Even if religion persisted as an organizing principle of social life, its days were numbered.

Modernization theory had less than a decade of uncontested authority, but its effects on comparative historical analysis have been enduring. It was the impetus for a generation of social scientists to look to history to understand the origins of contemporary political systems. But it also bequeathed a set of blinders to future generations of researchers through the concepts, theories and data employed in the foundational work in comparative historical analysis. The prevailing understanding of the origins of the modern state, and the development of liberal democracy in particular, is constructed from stylized, teleological histories. The “data” problems were compounded by the use of teleological concepts and theories that foreclosed serious investigation of the concrete conditions from which these contemporary forms of political life developed, and the factors that contributed to their transformation.

The limitations of current frameworks for understanding political development are due in part to the failure of either historians or social scientists to think historically about the processes they sought to explain. According to Gadamer, “historical thinking” entails the creation of an interpretive horizon that mediates the ideas of the past and the concerns and preconceptions of the present that motivate, and inevitably shape the point of inquiry (1975:398).³ This project certainly reflects the time and place of its origins, in

³ This book, *Truth and Method*, was first published in 1960 and considerably influenced the historical self-consciousness of subsequent generations of historians and social scientists.

its concern with the impact of religion on political processes and the liberal, statist solutions generated through religious conflict. Religion is perhaps a more obvious concern at the beginning of the twenty-first century than it was in the post-World War II period, given the prevalence of religious claims over civil authority, and the increased salience of “public religion” (Casanova 1994) in political life. However, tools for thinking historically about the past are also far more available to contemporary researchers than they were several decades ago. The temporal myopia and teleological frameworks of analysis that detract from early comparative historical studies of political processes were problems in history as well as in the social sciences. Historians have since grappled with these problems theoretically and methodologically, and their insights led to substantial revision of early modern historiography.

The conceptual and empirical problems in much comparative historical analysis stem from the dialectical nature of history as both an enterprise of meaning making and a record of the meanings that prevailed among particular groups at particular times. In the disciplinary division of labor, from the point of view of the social sciences the task of the historian was to provide data, while social scientists provided theories that explained the present in terms of the past. The past was a laboratory of cases to test theories, or a database for generating theories that would account for political change through recognition of regularities in patterns of distribution of populations, resources or power. The dual nature of history complicates this simple division of labor. The evolution of history as a discipline and the various uses to which the past has been put in different contexts are thus important aspects of understanding how to interpret particular sources.

Problematic Histories

From the ancient Greeks to the early modern period, history was regarded as a tool to teach and inspire. Its virtue was in the requirements of the collective it served rather than transparency and truth. History writing was a self-consciously interpretive enterprise, in which political necessity trumped factual accuracy. The present was the measure and purpose of a given past, whether real or imagined. In ancient Greece, Herodotus used his stories of dilemmas, burdens and sacrifice to illuminate the qualities of a good life. Thucydides conveyed lessons about democratic citizenship in his account of the Peloponnesian War, and numerous plays employed a mythic past to reinforce the responsibilities, benefits and perils of collective life. All pasts were fictions because they did not exist independent of a temporally bounded communal purpose. Cicero claimed an ideal of truth, but even for him history ultimately belonged to the realm of rhetoric. It was a tool to persuade and edify. This understanding of the historian's role was also evident during the Renaissance and early modern period. For Machiavelli the past was a source of instruction in the creation and exercise of power. *Discourses on Titus Livy*, for example, urges his readers to be acquainted with the events of the past so that they might imitate them. History was a "useful" guidebook for how one should act in the present.

"Histories" have also long justified and inspired political change. They naturalized new identities by linking them to existing values and institutions through narratives of development in some cases. In other cases, stories justified political innovation by demonstrating the permanent presence of a proper state of affairs that had been hijacked by an illegitimate ruler. Political entrepreneurs used history to demonstrate that changes in power relations were not new, but a return to an ideal state of the past. In

early modern England, Republicans, religious radicals and the Episcopal establishment all justified their political visions on the basis of its constant presence of over time. The monarchy's challengers appealed to the ancient constitution, the Hebrew Bible, or the godly nature of the English nation. Supporters of the English state-church endowed it with illustrious roots that extended back to the ninth century. English Protestantism reinterpreted the past as the source of a fortuitous present. Despite an avowed commitment to the Ciceronian maxim of "truth" as the "first law of historical writing" among historians of this period, history production was often an exercise in linking the present regime to an idealized past.⁴ The idea of history as a branch of rhetoric, also indebted to Cicero, had a far deeper impact than historical accuracy on the practice of the craft.

The Enlightenment vision of political change saw history as bringing to fruition another permanent quality that had been subverted or redirected under previous orders: rationality. In these narratives, humanity was awakening to reason and throwing off

⁴ Examples include Bacon, More, and Holinshed. Anniius of Viterbo created entirely fictitious history in the name of Berosus, a Babylonian writer, to establish Viterbo as the cradle of Roman civilization. The Galfridian myth that Britain was founded by Brutus and the legends of King Arthur were cherished 'truths' of British history – see Geoffrey of Monmouth: *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Lewis Thorpe (trans.), (London 1966). Humfrey Lhuyd, *The Breviary of Britayne*, (London 1573). *The famous Historie of Chinon of England by Christopher Middleton. To Which is Added the Assertion of King Arthure Translated by Richard Robinson from Leland's Asserio Inclytissimi Arturii*, ed. W.E. Mead, Early English Text Society, 165 (1925). On Holinshed, see Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (1994). See also Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford 2003) and D.R. Woolf. *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology and 'The Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto 1990). Patrick Collison argues that the histories read by the educated in the 17th century were mostly ancient history translated in 16th century – these he says were late excursions into a kind of cultural nationalism – during the Elizabethan period most educated people bought their books abroad (1988).

traditional ways. Rationally derived principles would replace inherited patterns of social relations as the basis of government, fulfilling a telos inherent in history itself. In his essay, “The Idea of a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent,” Kant articulates the tension between an understanding of the past as a human created and transmitted set of stories, and the notion of history as a material process with (potentially) its own logic and causality. He wagers that humans are not entirely governed by the natural laws that control other beings and phenomena; through will and reason people project themselves past natural instincts toward unbounded possibilities. Yet humans were hampered by lack of access to the “plan” within which they exercise their creative faculties, and uncertainty of whether one exists. Kant ultimately makes a case for positing the meaning he regarded as essential to creating an ethical world in history itself. Intentional history, like rationality in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, would be a regulative ideal. Belief in the progressive realization of human capacity through history would inspire people to act to make progress a reality. Faith in the logic of history, the notion that human beings are collectively moving toward a better, freer, more equal world, was in Kant’s view a fundamental condition of its fruition. Without such faith, he declared, “we are faced not with a law governed nature, but with an aimless, random process, and the dismal reign of chance replaces the guiding principle of reason” (1784:42).

This Enlightenment conception of history represented a critical departure from earlier struggles with the question of human agency. The problem of the human will in a cosmology of an omnipotent God had long been a concern of theo-philosophical discourse, developed particularly by such thinkers as Augustine, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus. However, while ancient and medieval philosophers regarded human beings

against a static background of physical reality – entirely independent of any divine trajectory – their counterparts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries understood humans as active creators of a more just world. This happened from within religious thought in the mid-seventeenth century in England a century before it was elaborated as the basis of humanist philosophy on the European continent. Some versions of post-Reformation Christianity collapsed the distinction between sacred and profane time, interpreting biblical prophecies as real historical inevitabilities that believers were duty bound to facilitate. Others put access to the divine entirely beyond human capacity, leaving only reason and natural law as a basis for moral direction. The Reformation made the redemptive promise of Christianity an historical reality for some: the utopian order foretold by the prophets was no longer outside of history but something that would be realized in human time and as a result of human effort.

The Enlightenment vision of history regarded time as having its own causality. For Hegel, and later Marx, the idea of history as telos replaced the idea of an external truth. In a master narrative that bears striking resemblance to the ideas of the mid-seventeenth century millennialists, they saw history as the progressive realization of human freedom. For Hegel, the world state would render justice – as developed within human thought – an actuality. Marx, on the other hand, saw history as manifesting the latent human potential for freedom by transforming economic relations toward an ever-greater capacity to meet human need. The concomitant oppression of the majority of people under capitalism meanwhile, would forge a universal class whose common interest would provoke an equitable redistribution of social wealth. The combination of mechanization, and nearly universal dispossession would ultimately secure freedom for

all of humanity. For Marx, as for the seventeenth century millennialists, history followed a logical, discernible pattern. The past was a key to understanding how the future would unfold.

The idea of history as manifesting a telos – the sense that a developmental, redemptive logic underlies human life in common – has had a profound effect on the social sciences. Modernity inherited both the legacy of the Hegelian view of history as an agent of development, and the Kantian understanding of belief in history as a condition of action toward the realization of ideals. The Kantian perspective highlights the narrative construction of meaning as an ethical act that constitutes one's relationship with the world. It informed a tradition of reflection that recognizes perspective as bounded, and ultimate truth as forever remote from human understanding. On the other hand, the Hegelian influence nourished a tradition of analysis that takes history as a resource for understanding reality. History reveals the hidden potential of human life, the logic of the structures that humans create, and the ways that those structures shape human interaction, reflection and expression. In a general sense, the Kantian legacy is borne by the humanities, while the social sciences have built upon Hegel's foundation. The ethical underpinnings of knowledge, what we need ideationally to create a more just world, and how people have responded to circumstances by creating meaning, have been left to philosophy, literature, religion and art. The social sciences, on the other hand, looked to discover the processes and conditions that generated various patterns of human interaction.

In this context, history bridged the divide. It was a record of events and of the meanings people created in the world. But it was also a meaning-making enterprise in its

provision of master narratives for collective life and justification of institutions. From a social science point of view, history provided data about happenings in the past and the underlying logic of explanation. While the Hegelian/Marxist tradition provided conceptual tools for reflecting on analysis of the past as an exercise in meaning-making that was fundamentally tied to a particular set of economic relations, the dominant strain of scholarship that developed out of this tradition forgot about the knowledge problem at the core of this mode of inquiry. Particularly among political scientists, history became accepted as data for discovering the natural laws governing human behavior. In such inquiry the past was taken as a given, a knowable state of affairs that one could sequence and compare, correlating initial conditions to outcomes.⁵

This dominant approach to history in political science is problematic with respect to both the nature of the data on which it is based and the assumptions that are unconsciously imported into analysis through the teleological nature of the concepts and the logic of causality. With respect to the first problem, political scientists engaged in

⁵ In other disciplines meanwhile, the inevitably constructed nature of any ‘past’ and the interpretive dimensions of encounters with it became central philosophical concerns. Roland Barthes, Merleau Ponty, Stuart Hall, Clifford Geertz and Jacques Derrida, to name but a few, began to interrogate the nature of meaning within texts that were the dominant means of knowledge transmission over time. They drew on the other pole of the Hegelian dialectic, arguing that texts have multiple, embedded meanings that hold hidden narratives of power. The truth lay in their multiplicity; the route to understanding was through deconstruction. This paradigm was effective in bringing to light the hidden or excluded dimensions of stories of the past, and in demonstrating the power of one’s vantage in shaping what one sees.

This problematizing of history is largely ignored by comparative historical analysts in political science. Political scientists rarely consider the contested nature of the past with respect to the reliability of “history” as data or the teleological assumptions built into the concepts through which such data is captured. Some scholars have tried to work around the problems raised by these challenges from other fields by looking at changes in objectively measurable conditions such as population, or trade (Goldstone 1986). However, these indicators of social change still tend to be interpreted in the context of teleological narratives of political development.

comparative historical analysis rarely take into account the link between hegemonic stories of the past and the distribution of resources in the spatial and temporal contexts within which those stories were produced and transmitted. Particularly in early efforts to understand the origins of contemporary political formations, scholars employed history as if it were factually uncomplicated.⁶ They approached it as a singular, transparent data set that is knowable independent of biases and exclusions created either through the contemporary point of inquiry or the process of historical reproduction.⁷ Subsequently, comparative historical analysis developed by building on the theoretical insights of previous scholars. New generations of analysts tended to focus on refinement of the models of political life, rather than on their assumptions and data. Because of their overconfidence in the histories they inherited and lack of reflexivity about the bounded nature of knowledge production, scholars reproduced and naturalized the exclusions, errors and biases in earlier works.

The other problem with comparative historical analysis is the tendency to import teleological assumptions through the concepts or causal links employed in the

⁶ The use of history in social science actually originated in sociology and was then imported into political science. In the 1960s the use of history in sociology was largely to justify modernization theory. Among path breaking early works are Lipset (1959), Moore (1966), Tilly (1967, 1975), Wallerstein (1974), Eisenstadt (1963, 1978) and Anderson (1974).

⁷ Lipset's introductory essay to his edited volume, *Sociology and History: Methods*, describes the predominant paradigm of the relationship between history and the social sciences. He characterizes history as an inherently "particularizing" discipline, while sociology is inherently "generalizing." History can provide sociology with sound data while sociology can endow history with better concepts and analytic techniques. See "History and Sociology: Some Methodological Considerations," in Lipset and Hofstadter (1968) and Skocpol, Theda. *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

explanation.⁸ To some degree this is a consequence of the presentism inherent to the task of the political scientist. In this mode of inquiry, the purpose of the researcher is to identify antecedent conditions that through some intervening process facilitate the transformation of a phenomena x to its temporally progressed form x_i . The modern concept x_i generally contains an idea of its relationship to the prior state x in the form of a developmental narrative. As William Sewell explains, teleology is built into concepts when a particular historical present is explained in terms of events in the future (2005). Explanations, on the other hand, are teleological when cause is attributed to abstract historical processes, rather than to either the specific actions and reactions that constitute the phenomena, or to concrete conditions that constrain those actions and reactions (2005:84). The idea of “tradition” for example, is a teleological concept because it has meaning only with respect to the ‘modern’ it would become. Modernization theory more generally, provides a narrative link between old and new forms of social life. It imports numerous assumptions about the nature of the “old” patterns of social organization that would yield to (or perhaps facilitate) standardization and rationalization of collective life.

One problem with teleological concepts is that they foreclose consideration of alternative outcomes by imposing a trajectory of development.⁹ The prior condition is merely the present point of interest minus a set of intervening variables or processes. A

⁸ This problem was first identified by Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931) and later by J.H. Hexter in *On Historians* (1979). Butterfield objected principally to the selection of the past from the point of view of the achievements of the present. Hexter was critical of the tendency among (principally Marxist) historians to employ overarching generalizations to the past.

⁹ Recent scholarship within comparative historical analysis has attempted to deal with this problem by thinking in terms of critical junctures and alternative paths of development. See for example the work of Paul Pierson (2004), James Mahoney (2001), Ruth and David Collier (2004), Collier (2007).

deeper problem is that they set the horizon of inquiry by telling the researcher what doesn't need to be explained. Among the teleological narratives that underlie political inquiry is the idea of historical progression from uniformity to diversity. Modernity's self-construction in terms of urbanization, plurality and scientific rationalism imputes a notion of the past in terms of homogeneity, religiosity and agrarian life. The accuracy of these assumptions involves not only the degree to which these features describe social life at a particular time and place. It also entails understanding their meaning in a particular context. Each of these terms might constitute a pole of an opposition or a point on a continuum within the historical context in question that is quite different from its meaning in contemporary language. Viewing the past in terms of contemporary categories can create an inaccurate picture of the phenomena in question. The question of homogeneity, for example, requires criteria for group differentiation within the relevant context. But even if the features of an historical phenomenon are accurately identified by contemporary categories, their impact will vary with respect to other historical conditions. With respect to homogeneity, the array of distinctions that might be invoked to describe a society, such as ethnic, racial, or religious, are meaningless independent of the social context in which they are constructed. A robust understanding of the "prior conditions" from which political change occurs is thus an important aspect of recognizing change itself, and identifying the factors that contributed to it. Until recently, in much comparative historical analysis the "prior conditions" of political development were largely left unexamined because teleological concepts did the explanatory work.

New Approaches to the Problem

During the last several decades, scholars have substantially reconsidered the histories of early modern England that informed the prevailing understanding of the origins of liberal political ideas and institutions. Historians inspired by developments within their own field, as well as in anthropology, comparative literature, and philosophy, found new source material and developed more reflexive methods of engaging with the past. Chief among their methodological interventions were an attempt to take the past on its own terms rather than impose categories and a teleological trajectory of their development from a repertoire of contemporary political action. They foreground social processes by looking at micro-level phenomena, and the lives of ordinary people. Many confronted the past as “another country,” self-consciously employing interpretive techniques rather than presuming congruence between past and present concepts, or the transparency of meaning independent of context and modes of speech (Pocock 1957; Skinner 1969, 1974; Russell 1973; Gadamer 1960; Geertz 1973).

This body of scholarship is a substantial resource for reconsidering the development of liberal political thought in early modern England. The insights from this work continue to be ignored in historical institutionalist scholarship, which often proceeds from an idealized understanding of the European and Anglo-American trajectory. Among the central challenges revisionist historiography poses to the prevailing paradigms of historical institutionalism is the centrality of religion to political life at all levels of society. In one respect, this is not surprising. Within the history of political thought there is a strong tradition linking liberal individualism to Protestant Christianity that supports the idea that Christian theology had an elective affinity with liberal democracy. But in another respect, these observations overcome entrenched ideas

about the societies in which liberal political concepts first developed. Liberalism is strongly associated with secularism, and both historical institutionalist analysis of the origins of the modern liberal state, and comparative assessments of the impact of religion on democratization generally presume that religion was marginalized from public life by the time people began talking about rights and restraining governmental power.

The argument takes as a point of departure the development of religious toleration in England. It begins with this question because it is one of the central myths about the trajectory of liberalism, and it is frequently employed in cross-cultural comparisons of the relationship between religion and democracy. The first section reviews the literature on nationalism, state development and revolutions in light of several decades of revisionist historiography of early modern England. It demonstrates the erroneous assumptions built into models of political development because of the neglect of religion. In particular, it challenges the premise of English secularization, and class based explanations of political change. Subsequent chapters demonstrate the importance of religion in redefining the state in terms of liberal political principles. Chapter three describes the institutional changes wrought by de-differentiation of church and state in the sixteenth century. It further demonstrates the origins of the discourses of resistance and civil authority that would be elaborated on both sides of the toleration debates in the seventeenth century. Chapters Four and Five track the toleration debates before and during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum, demonstrating the new discourses of political membership, responsibility and entitlement generated through the conflict between the monarchy and self-organizing religious communities. Chapter Six shows the impact of the Restoration on the theories of citizenship and the state generated during the Civil War period. The

pamphlets, newspapers and political tracts through which the toleration debates took place provide a record of the cultural developments that were simultaneous to England's consolidation as a modern state. They offer insight into the power struggles that arose through the constitution of a singular authoritative principle of government from a plurality of power centers. Finally, they illustrate that liberalism developed conceptually and institutionally through contention about religion, rather than through either class conflict or a quality inherent to Christianity itself.

Chapter Two: Religious Dissent and The Origins of Liberalism

Comparative historical analysis of political development has largely omitted religion from discussions of state development, nationalism, and various features of liberal political systems. This absence is a consequence of a parallel neglect of religion in historiography throughout much of the twentieth century, and the tendency within both history and political science to privilege economic causality in narratives of political change. Developments in the historiography of early modern England challenge the assumptions on which much analysis of the origins of liberal political institutions are based. They highlight the key role of religion in the extension of state capacity and establishment of the state as a focal point of political life. The chapter concludes by arguing that the centrality of religion to seventeenth century politics, rather than its absence, is the key to understanding the development of political pluralism and the origins of liberal principles of government.

In “Religion, Democracy and the Twin Tolerations” Alfred Stepan (2001), one of the most astute observers of democratization in the wake of communism, challenged the notion that liberal democracies require a firm wall between church and state. He points out the perhaps obvious, but little acknowledged fact that until the late twentieth century one third of the European Union member states had established churches, including all of the longstanding European democracies with a strong Lutheran majority. Furthermore, in European Union states without established churches, religious organizations commonly retain privileged positions in education and social welfare distribution. There is also often a high degree of interpenetration between religious and political organizations, including religious parties, government collections of tithes, privileged access to state contracts by religious organizations and state funding of religious schools. Empirical evidence, Stepan demonstrates, clearly does not sustain the perception that secularism is either a necessary or an actual condition of many of the world’s democracies. Rather than separation of church and state, he suggests that democracy entails a ‘twin toleration,’ characterized by mutual non-intrusion of religion and state.

Stepan's reframing of the church-state dilemma is an important corrective to the idealized notion of this relationship in fully democratic societies that scholars often invoke in assessing the impact of Eastern Orthodoxy, Confucianism and especially Islam, on the prospects for democratization in various contexts. Such discussions frequently emphasize the dispositional effects of religious doctrine on the members of a society.¹⁰ They focus on the conceptual resources within a particular tradition that dispose people to recognize the authority of a secular state and value representative government and political pluralism.¹¹ Implicit in this type of analysis is the assumption that Christianity either possesses the necessary resources to support liberal democracy, or conducted the emergence of liberal democracy through its decline in influence over public life. Both narratives tie religion to democratic development through its psychosocial effects on members of a society: religion shapes the way people think, and thus determines their preferred form of government. Stepan's intervention directs analysis to the institutional balance between church and state, rather than to the impact of specific religious narratives on individual orientation toward authority. His institutional approach promotes analysis of church and state as distinct but mutually constituting realms of authority, and highlights the variety of ways advanced liberal democracies negotiate their relationship.

The concept of "twin tolerations" helps to cast the church – state dilemma as a political struggle between competing institutions. However, a purely institutional approach ultimately provides little more than a prescription for the liberal democratic

¹⁰ For a critique of dispositional explanation see Tilly, Charles. *Identities, Boundaries and Social Ties*. Paradigm Publishers 2005:25.

¹¹ For examples of this type of argument with respect to Islam, see, Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic*. September 1990; Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*. Routledge 1994. Kedourie argues that representative government is "profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition," p. 6.

outcome of such contention. Apart from post-revolutionary contexts, in which political elites are writing new constitutions to establish liberal democratic regimes, the pressing question regarding religion and democracy is generally not, how religious interests can be accommodated within the state. Rather, the central concern both among proponents of liberalism within authoritarian regimes and among outside observers is how liberal democratic principles might be demanded, accepted and implemented as the governing ideology. The emphasis on the dispositional effect of religious narratives on attitudes toward democracy is a consequence of these concerns. Where Stepan's analysis takes liberal principles with respect to church and state as given, "culturalist" explanations don't presume either the acceptance of liberal principles in particular contexts or their universal appeal.

As Stepan and others have observed, the institutional guarantees that scholars recognize as necessary for democratic governance are not sufficient to sustain it.¹² Broad acceptance of value pluralism and the legitimacy of ideologically driven competition for political power, as well as acceptance by all parties of a given procedure as the source of legitimate government are necessary conditions for the functioning of these institutions. Recognition that liberal democratic institutions require liberal democratically minded citizens has led some scholars to question the potential compatibility between particular

¹² Stepan draws upon a definition of democracy presented by Dahl in *Polyarchy* as a governing arrangement through which citizens have the opportunity to formulate and signify preferences and have those preferences weighed adequately in the conduct of government. Dahl stipulates eight institutional protections necessary to the achievement of democracy: 1) freedom to form and join organizations, 2) freedom of expression, 3) the right to vote, 4) eligibility for public office, 5) the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, 6) a variety of sources of information, 7) free and fair elections, 8) institutions that link governing policies to expressions of popular preferences. Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1972.

knowledge cultures and the requirements of citizens in liberal democracies. However, this approach ignores the fact that citizen capacity, public values, and identity are co-constituted with particular institutional arrangements (Levi 1997, Rothstein 2000, Smith 2003). Neither a purely institutionalist approach, nor one that emphasizes the psychosocial impact of religious doctrine independent of the political context within which it is engaged, is sufficient to capture the complex interaction between religion and political power. The institutional approach tends to begin with an ahistorical ideal that abstracts institutions from the norms, values and identities of the people who ultimately reproduce the patterns of interaction through which they are constituted. The dispositional approach, on the other hand, tends to conceptualize religion as autonomous and monolithic, rather than as adapting, negotiated and deployed by situated actors. Religion's influence tends to be regarded as a unidirectional process through which doctrine shapes people's worldview. It is more productively regarded as a dynamic process through which people actively interpret, contest and reproduce particular discourses. Furthermore, the meanings of any discourse cannot be understood independent of the context in which the discourse is invoked. The liberal institutional ideal and myths about the historical trajectory of (Western) liberal democratic states tend to designate religious discourse as belonging to the past and inimical to rationalism, universalism and pluralism, as the hallmarks of the modern state.

The potential of a particular discourse to promote or impede democratization is best considered as a dynamic process of interaction between ideas and institutions. Furthermore, the foundation for understanding the impact of religion on political development in a comparative context cannot rely on an ideal endpoint of liberal

democracy, but requires instead a process based understanding of the impact of religion on the development of contemporary liberal democratic states. Questions provoked by Stepan's framing of the issue are how religion and politics, as organizational forces of material and ideational resources, might arrive at such an institutional balance, and how plural knowledge systems might come to be popularly accepted as a condition of public life. How, as Habermas poses the question, might a religion come to relinquish its claim to an encompassing definition of life and its adherents come to accept behavioral limits on pursuing the ethos inscribed in their world view?¹³ Pluralism must first be recognized as a public good. The historical development of these concepts and the conditions of their acceptance as governing principles are thus important points of departure for theorizing the constraining or enabling influence of religion on political development.

However, the standard arguments that historicize the relationship between ideas and institutions are limited and often misleading. In some narratives, Christianity is portrayed as having declined to the point of irrelevance as a structuring force in public life. In others, Protestant Christianity is characterized as uniquely compatible with liberal democracy. Christianity fostered liberal democracy either by cultivating autonomous individuals or by providing the conceptual tools to support a distinction between religious and civil obligation. Neither narrative adequately represents the historical dynamic through which liberal democratic principles developed conceptually and were secured as the foundation of government. The categories and institutional manifestations of these

¹³ Habermas argues that liberal democracies require "the epistemic ability to consider one's faith reflexively from the outside and to relate it to secular views." See Habermas, Jürgen. "Religion in the Public Sphere" (ch. 5), *Between Naturalism and Religion*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006. See also Habermas, Jürgen. "Religious Tolerance – The Pacemaker for Cultural Rights," *Philosophy*, 79, 2004.

principles are the product of the proliferation of communities of faith in the face of efforts to institute ecclesiastical conformity, and impassioned theological debates about the scope of state power and the necessity of religious homogeneity for political order.

This project examines the change in the relationship between political power and religious authority in early modern England. England is a reasonable starting point for understanding the evolution of this relationship because the political ideas developed during the seventeenth century were enormously consequential in advancing liberal democratic government over the ensuing two centuries. From this period emerged the modern notions of citizenship, popular sovereignty, and political pluralism, as well as of public rationality, the political party and the private sphere as a limit on governmental power. This is not to say that all of these ideas were institutionally secured during this period. However, they were developed conceptually through public debate that transformed the fundamental conditions of government.

The degree to which these ideas inspired political challenges in other contexts justifies consideration of early modern England as a formative moment in the development of liberal principles. One needn't look far to see the influence of Locke on the United States Constitution or the importance of rights theorists such as James Harrington and Algernon Sidney to the American founders. English republican and proto-liberal ideas were similarly influential during the French revolution. Burke's distinction between the abstract rights claimed by French revolutionaries and the practical rights of Englishmen – derived in his understanding from tradition and networks of obligation – responds to what he regarded as misappropriation of those ideas to justify a misguided political program. Marx also observed, “the free thought of the French Revolution...was

imported into France from no other country than England. Locke was its father, and in Shaftsbury and Bolingbroke it assumed that lively form which later underwent such a brilliant development in France” (1850:4).

Democracy came to be valued as a system of government that would best protect rights first articulated in response to the extension of political authority through the church in early modern England. Freedom of conscience, and the supporting liberties of speech, the press, and association became matters of collective concern in response to the monarchy’s use of the state church to promote cultural uniformity. People claimed these rights as necessary conditions of the emergence of divine truth in the world. In popular discourse in the early and mid-seventeenth century, these rights were grounded in an ideal of popular convergence on a single truth through collective experience, exposure and debate. If God moved in the world through the hearts and actions of believers, then freedom of expression and association were essential to the work of the faithful in actualizing divine truth.

Religion, understood as a set of beliefs, codified practices and social relations, was the terrain on which the struggle for political rights was first established. Theological debate was critical to the definition of the political community as distinct from the will of the monarchy, and to the elaboration of the particular rights and obligations of citizens and rulers. Even theorists who are commonly considered in the secular humanist camp, such as Hobbes and Locke, regarded God as essential to binding obligations and thus to the prospects of a just political order. As Waldron points out in *God, Locke and Equality*, for Locke, recognition of God was the basis for political equality. A person’s worthiness of political equality required the “capacity to engage in abstract thought sufficient to

‘think of his soul’” (2002: 88). The church as an institution was understood by a broad sector of society to be critical to the security and maintenance of the political constitution, and there was virulent opposition to either relaxing its criteria for incorporation or limiting its purview to voluntary members.

The back-story to the state-church balance that Stepan identifies as necessary for democracy is the struggle between competing *religious* definitions of the political community. This chapter presents the ways in which this process has been understood by historians and social scientists. I argue that the histories upon which social scientist continue to rely in theorizing the origins of liberalism have created significant misconceptions that are an obstacle to understanding the relationship between religion and political development. The “Whig” and materialist narratives that dominated early modern historiography for much of the twentieth century did not recognize religion as a significant force in social and political life. The assumption of secularization at the core of both of these approaches foreclosed consideration of how liberal concepts emerged from the Christian tradition and won acceptance as the standard of just government.

Whig and Marxist Historiographies and Varieties of Revision

Since the mid-twentieth century, historians of early modern England have challenged the “Whig” narrative of the origin of liberal ideas and institutions that several generations of their predecessors accepted as unassailable. The Whig account of British political development presented the goals of the Liberal party and the Reform Bill of 1832 as the culmination of a gradual extension of rights initiated by the Protestant

Reformation, the "Puritan Revolution,"¹⁴ and the Glorious Revolution. Social historians (Tawney 1941, Hill 1940) were the first to contest this view, disrupting the notion that English liberty was a consequence of a peaceful advance of principle, if not the teleological nature of the account.¹⁵ Following Marx and Engels they understood the events of the seventeenth century as a stage in the development of capitalism. In their view, the "Puritan Revolution" was actually a bourgeois revolution in which the merchant class took control of the state and broke down the feudal order. The period was characterized by class conflict, and the struggle of an emerging bourgeoisie to eliminate an inefficient system of land tenure. Like the "old (Whig) historians" they were challenging, Marxist historians regarded the political conflict in the seventeenth century as having set in motion a set of processes whose effects could be reconstructed or inferred on the basis of the features of modernity with which they were concerned, English liberty in the one case and capitalism in the other. As J.D. Clark asserts in his scathing (and perhaps overdrawn) characterization of the blind spots in English historiography, lack of empirical attention to the "dark age" of 1660 to 1760 made it particularly amenable to social cause explanations (1986:31, 43). Marxist inspired

¹⁴ According to Christopher Hill, "Puritan Revolution" was the predominant name for the conflict between the king and Parliament in the 1640s in the early years of his education. This term was popularized by Samuel Gardiner, a 'Whig' historian who characterized the events as overcoming an oppressive church to make way for religious toleration. Hill asserts that the term lost favor when Marx, Weber and Tawney, "taught us that religion was not a self-sufficient motivating factor, but was mixed up with economic and social matters, with the rise of capitalism." "English Revolution" became the preferred term among social historians. Revisionists tend to use the term 'English Civil Wars' to describe the events, but "English Revolution" is again becoming common among post revisionists. See Christopher Hill. "God and the English Revolution," (1984) and R.C. Richardson. *The Debate on the English Revolution* (1977).

¹⁵ Tawney, unlike Hill, was not a Marxist but his work was highly influenced by Marx in both its focus on common people and tendency to understand historical events in terms of the emergence of capitalism.

historians viewed the impact of the revolutions of 1641 and 1688 through a lens of socioeconomic causality, finding a ‘rising middle class’ associated with an ideology of ‘possessive individualism.’ Where Whigs saw the period as the alembic of liberty, Marxists understood it as establishing the conditions of bourgeois dominance. In the Marxist narratives, socioeconomic causes (frequently unsubstantiated) replaced great ideas as the driving force of political change. Religion, if recognized at all, was understood as a reflection of alliances and anxieties that stemmed from economic relations.¹⁶

Dissatisfaction with both the old histories and the class conflict explanations inspired a wave of historical revisionism that emphasized manuscript sources and close attention to context. Central to the approach of this group of historians was an effort to avoid a search for prior causes of contemporary phenomena by viewing historical events through a teleological lens. They strove to describe historical relations with respect to the broadest possible base of archival evidence, rather than to merely locate the preconditions of subsequent developments. For historians of political ideas a telos-free approach further entailed deriving analytic categories of action from repertoires contemporary to the speaker rather than to the analyst (Skinner 1969, 1974; Pocock 1960). Conrad Russell (1973, 1990), Kevin Sharpe (1978, 1992), John Morrill (1974, 1976) and Mark Kishlansky (1979, 1986), among others, challenged both the Whig and Marxist narratives by arguing that the premise of Parliamentary strength in the pre-Civil War period was not

¹⁶ Christopher Hill’s *English Revolution* recognizes the religious framing of the debates during the 1640s and 1650s as well as the centrality of religion to public life. However, he interprets religion only as a pillar of the old order. In his account the throne sought to control its monopoly over communication, and those who wanted to overthrow the feudal state struggled to gain control over the church. Religion was ultimately a proxy for class interest in the struggle between the rising bourgeoisie and the old regime.

sustained by close inquiry, nor did deep ideological divisions characterize social relations. Challenges to their conclusions, undertaken with the same spirit and methodological commitments, presented evidence that social and ideological divisions did exist (Fletcher 1975; Worden 1974; Sommerville 1986; Tyacke 1987; Underdown 1973, 1985) but they did not necessarily break down across class lines. Others demonstrated that the most consequential land enclosures, a centerpiece of class conflict in the Marxist analysis, occurred a century earlier and were neither as violent nor as divisive as previous scholars assumed (Spufford 1974, Hey 1974, Sharp 1980, Charlesworth 1983). Many of these historians rejected the focus on high politics of early revisionism, turning instead to social records for details of every day life in particular communities. These “New Social Historians”, whose work was highly influenced by Clifford Geertz, sought to create histories from the bottom up through ‘thick description’ (1973b).

English Historiography in Political Science

The teleological thrust¹⁷ of both the Whig and Marxist histories have had a significant impact on the expectations and analysis of political scientists with respect to the course of political and economic development. The cultural historians of the late 1960s and 1970s largely provided the ‘data’ upon which much political scientific analysis was based. The most influential accounts of revolutions, nation-state formation and the origins of liberal democracy, in particular those of Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol,

¹⁷ Russell describes teleological history as a tendency to use history to explain why events led to their conclusion. He does not eschew the investigation of causes but seeks to eliminate the contamination of hindsight from inquiry, and avoid the presumption that a particular result was inevitable. (1990a:x).

Benedict Anderson, and Charles Tilly,¹⁸ rely upon historical narratives constructed from Marxist categories. In their explanations the driving force was class conflict and religion had long been displaced by new social forces.¹⁹ The Whig account, on the other hand, intersected with the Marxist version in its understanding of liberal democratic societies as a consequence of the gradual extension of universalist principles, occasioned by the decline of divinity as the ascendant force in public life and the advent of scientific rationalism. These ideas informed modernization theory and assumptions about the social and cultural prerequisites of liberal democracies.²⁰

Archival research by revisionists, post revisionists and cultural historians continues to generate new data for understanding the factors that contributed to the political upheaval in seventeenth century England. Disagreement persists with respect to core questions such as the significance of the events, the degree of inter and intra-class ideological division and the relationship between the crown and the localities. Nonetheless this body of scholarship unequivocally establishes the centrality of religion at all levels of social and political organization. Consequently, many of the assumptions on which political scientific analysis rests are now discredited. Religion rather than class, for example, is the principal predictor of alliances during the English civil wars (Morrill 1984, Clark 1986). There is little evidence of either a rising middle class or an ideology of individualism (Hexter 1961, Stone 1976, Zagorin 1969). Nor does archival evidence

¹⁸ Tilly's account of nation state formation in *Capital, Coercion and the Modern State*, synthesizes the bellicose model of Hintze that sees geopolitical competition as the causal agent in state development and the Marxist model that understands it as a consequence of economic relations. He does not consider the impact of religion.

¹⁹ Moore for example, asserts that Henry VIII's main significance to subsequent development in England was to damage the Church as a pillar of the old order.

²⁰ For examples of this influence see *World Religions and Democracy*, (2005) Platner et alia (eds.).

sustain the presumptive association between Puritanism and either economic precocity or scientific rationalism (Tyacke 2001).²¹ The public continued to be conceptualized in religious terms and religious conformity was broadly accepted as a necessary condition of political stability.

Religion and Revolution

Political scientists continue to disregard or downplay the salience of religion despite recognition by historians that religion was at the core of political conflict in seventeenth century England (Russell 1990a, Morrill 1984, Tyacke 1973, Cogswell, et. alia 2002, Cust and Hughes 1989, Lamont 1969, Underdown 1971),²² not because of its

²¹ Tyacke challenges the association between Puritanism and economic development by demonstrating that the socioeconomic profiles of Puritans and non-Puritans were similar; religious orientation did not break down along class lines. He refutes the association with scientific rationalism by citing the continued flourishing of science at Oxford despite the ascent of Arminians.

²² See John Morrill, "The Religious Context of the English Civil War" (1984). Morrill argues that localist and legal constitutionalist perceptions of misgovernment lacked "the momentum and passion to bring about war." David Underdown further develops the notion that religious ideology was a critical factor in the Civil Wars in *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution*. (1971) as does Mark Kishlansky, in *The Rise of the New Model Army* (1979). In *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603-1660*, William Lamont argues that millenarianism represented "not alienation from the spirit of the age but a total involvement with it," (1969:13). In more recent work, Lamont (1996) offers another challenge to the "Tawney-Weber thesis" that associated Puritanism with scientific rationalism, liberty and revolution through a case study of three "Puritans", i.e. Richard Baxter, William Prynne and Logowicke Muggleton. Much of the first wave of revisionism emphasizes religiously inflamed politics in contrast to the secularization and universal ideals of liberalism and the unrevolutionary spirit that preceded the 1640s. Later work that built upon the ground cleared by historians such as Conrad Russell showed regional variation and the complex interrelationship between religious and secular power. Underdown, for example, sees the outbreak of war as tied to a growing cultural divide between the elite and common people.

declining importance, but precisely because of the passions to which it gave rise.²³ Barrington Moore for example, remains canonical despite the fact that much of the historiography upon which he drew has been refuted by newer evidence.²⁴ Scholars challenge his assessment of causality (Skocpol 1979, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992), but his general characterization of social relations is rarely questioned. In Moore's account of early 17th century England, "a modern and secular society was slowly pushing its way up through the vigorous and much tangled overgrowth of the feudal and ecclesiastical order" (1966:4). Religion, in Moore's understanding, had all but disappeared as a structuring force in political and social life. The notion that the old order was dying and that the erosion of its ideological foundation in religion was part and parcel of movement into the modern era renders explanation redundant and forecloses understanding of the role religion played in state development and political change. How religion came to be protected as a right, and why (if at all) it declined as a narrative of political membership are empirical questions whose answer is subsumed within the logic of history.

Moore's analysis further suffers from the tendency (rejected by revisionists) to

²³ Some recognize the importance of religion but regard it as an effect rather than a cause in its own right. See Zaret (1985:63), Walzer (1974), calls Puritanism "a practical effort to cope with personal and social problems". Goldstone recognizes the potential for religion to be instrumentalized in political conflict and its power as a source of symbolic resources - as do Sewell (2005), Swidler (1995) - but he does not consider religion either to be a sufficient catalyst to spark revolution nor to be sufficient to establish the conditions that ignite upon exposure to whatever that spark may be.

²⁴ For a critique of Moore's historiography from a political science perspective see Lustick (1996). The challenge posed by the revisionists goes a step further, indicting the majority of the British historiography at the time during which Moore was writing *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* for reading causes of democratic institutional development into the seventeenth century without empirical evidence to sustain their narratives.

impose a bipolar frame on English politics. In his construal, the conflict was between commercial classes and the crown. The new mercantile class fostered an ideology of rational individualism that was out of step with the old order: “the chief carriers of what was eventually to be a modern and secular society were at this time fundamentally men of commerce in both the countryside and the towns” (1966:13). Ideology and economic relations are understood as mutually constituting, the lack of evidence for the existence of this ideology notwithstanding.

In the 1980s Goldstone updated the analysis of the English Civil war by incorporating some of the observations of revisionists and the wealth of data concerning changing demographic patterns and local variation assembled by ‘new social historians’. His nuanced argument explains the revolutionary conditions in pre-Civil War England through a surge in population²⁵ – a 50% increase in the population of London and a 25% increase in England overall during the first half of the 17th century – as well as a twofold increase in grain prices, and increased competition among the gentry for patronage positions within the royal administration. Following Lawrence Stone he argues that the period was characterized by increased class mobility in both directions that heightened anxiety and competition among the gentry. Competition for patronage positions increased because the gentry population had grown considerably while the number of positions in the royal bureaucracy remained relatively constant. Because of the crown’s inability to keep pace with inflation, “the lines were drawn whereby the Stuarts could only achieve financial solvency at the cost of a political crisis “ (1986:280). Goldstone’s analysis identifies political change as a consequence of engagement between political actors

²⁵ Goldstone operationalizes population change as an independent variable rather than as a function of economic change.

whose relations shifted as a consequence of changes in structural conditions. His concern is to identify structural factors that led to revolutionary mobilization but he plausibly links those factors to micro processes. Goldstone's approach forces a contextualized understanding of the explanatory, or potentially explanatory factors and helps to avoid the trap of anachronistically projecting contemporary concepts or expectations regarding social relations onto the past. However, key components of his analysis are far from settled in debates among historians. Most notably, his characterization of the period in terms of class anxiety and insecure allegiances is challenged by more recent historiography (Sharpe 2000).

Unlike previous analyses Goldstone does consider the role of religion as a factor that influenced the "mobilization potential" of the population but he tends to relegate religion to a symptom rather than a cause. He defines "Puritanism" for example, as "a crusade – against corruption, Catholicism and popery – offered as a panacea to cure the nation's evident ills... Revolutionary Puritanism was thus more of an amalgamation of English Protestant Nationalism (Zaret 1985:63), a defense of traditional English ways, especially the Common Law; and an attack on all innovations in royal policy that smacked of popery than a purely religious phenomenon. It drew its crusading urgency from the fiscal and social problems of the day" (1986:296). Following Walzer, he presents the decline of Puritanism in the post-revolutionary period as further evidence that inflamed religious passions were attributable to the structural causes he identifies. Puritanism was a revolutionary ideology that developed in response to exigency and uncertainty.²⁶

²⁶ Walzer. Michael. *Revolution of the Saints* (1974).

Goldstone's treatment of religion in articulating the social requisites of what historians are again regarding as the English Revolution (Cressey 2006) is an important corrective to previous explanations, but it remains problematic in several respects. While a certain kind of millenarianism may have declined during the Restoration there is little evidence that religious attachment declined overall. Persecution of religious Nonconformity increased after the Restoration, especially among Quakers who were considered a serious threat to public order.²⁷ Religious dissenters, furthermore, were quite divided in terms of religious persuasion and political perspective in both the pre and post Civil War period (De Krey 1995:68). Puritanism was not necessarily conservative, and its defense of "traditional English ways" was often a strategy of innovation (Kewes 2006).²⁸

Goldstone limits consideration of the causal role of religion to a 'Puritanism' that was symptomatic of social unrest, rather than considering religion more broadly as a narrative that underwrote both royal power and its various challenges. In doing so he misses an important dimensions of the role of religion in generating 'revolutionary' conditions. More recent work in the localist vein that informed Goldstone's analysis demonstrates that religious affiliations created cross class interests rather than galvanized class alliances. On the basis of a study of nine communities across three localities, Margaret Spufford concluded that social relations were characterized by "a variety of

²⁷ Tim Harris estimates that religious Nonconformists comprised as much as 20% of the London population during Charles II's reign. In the 1680s at least 4,000 people (many of them more than once) were prosecuted under the Conventicle Act, one quarter of them were people of high social status. Thousands of Nonconformists were imprisoned, dispossessed or forced into exile during the 1660s and the "gathered churches" connected to the most progressive political ideas during the English Revolution were the target of virulent repression. See *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II* (1990:68).

²⁸ See also Pocock, J.G.A.. *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (1987).

puritan and sectarian groups, formed of an infinite mix of different social and economic compositions” (1995:4). The notion that dissenters were outsiders is challenged by Patrick Collison (1995:391) and Bill Stevenson (1995:332) in the same volume, and Derek Plumb (1995:103), Christopher Marsh (1998:160) and Stevenson (1995:360) demonstrate that dissenters came from all social ranks.²⁹

Although Goldstone interprets the heightened religious passions in the mid-seventeenth century as a symptom of social unrest rather than an independent cause, he does acknowledge that religious conflict can generate its own course of events. However, because he is primarily concerned with identifying macro-causes of social change his analysis does not consider the importance of frames of perception in motivating the individual actions that generate collective resistance. The problem with this type of explanation, as Tilly (2002), Goldstone³⁰ and many other scholars are recognizing at the beginning of the 21st century – after yet another wave of democratization gave scholars food for thought – is that identification of macro causes does not answer the most pressing questions about how political transformations occur. Goldstone’s analysis would be more compelling with greater attention to religion as both a narrative linking parliamentary and mass interest and as a dimension of state expansion that made it salient as a material condition shaping people’s lives. In his analysis, Puritanism, and religious

²⁹ In his essay “The World of Rural Dissenters,” Patrick Collison comments, “almost anyone could be a dissenter” (391); the notion that dissenters were outsiders in their communities (one employed by Goldstone), Derek Plumb in his study of the Lollards and Christopher Marsh in his of the Familists of Balsham demonstrate that their ranks included people of high as well as low social standing, that dissenters held parish offices and that church life resisted hierarchical control. Bill Stevenson challenges Christopher Hill’s assertion that dissidents rejected traditional community life.

³⁰ Thoughts expressed by Goldstone in speech commemorating Charles Tilly, *Contention, Change and Explanation: A Conference in Honor of Charles Tilly*. October 4, 2008,

behavior more generally, are a function of social and economic disruption rather than ‘purely religious phenomena’. Religious sentiment is a psychological reaction to uncertainty, a source of comfort in the face of threat to economic interest. His materialist bias precludes consideration of nonmaterial dimensions of interest, such as identity and beliefs. Reducing religion to a purely ideational phenomenon also misses important dimensions of its function as a vehicle for state power and thus its significance as a site of interaction between individuals and the monarchy. In short, while Goldstone is careful to avoid an ungrounded social explanation for mobilization potential, his readiness to dismiss religion as a real cause leads him to neglect consideration of its institutional force and entwinement with political authority.

Religion and the State

Among theorists of the modern state (Ertman, Spruyt 1996, Downing 1992, Tilly 1992) religion is generally given a passing comment that acknowledges its divisive role in society but the relationship between the religious division and political power is rarely considered. In the bellicose model of state development (Hintz 1975, Downing 1992, Tilly 1992, Spruyt 1996) religion is relevant only as a factor in geopolitical competition, or potentially as an ideology to promote popular support for war.³¹ In this model, as with

³¹ According to Clark (2000a) the state was taken as a given by historians until the 1970s and little attention was given to sources of state power. Research on revolutions and ‘state’ breakdown in the 1960s and 1970s substantiate his claim. Tilly, for example in his *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (1975) pays no attention to the law, religion or the ideology of nationalism to the detriment of his analysis. There is little room in any of the research from this period to conceptualize the state as more than a coercive force, no concept of the potentially positive role of the state in people’s lives. See Elton, Geoffrey. *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government* (Cambridge 1983) and *The English* (Oxford 1992). Siep Stuurman offers a similar critical of *Capital*

the Marxist model, the focus on macro-causes yields an explanation that offers little insight into the relationship of religious conflict to political development. In Ertman's analysis of how Britain managed to overcome the patrimonial consequences of early geopolitical competition the reader can infer an association between religion and corruption, given the entwinement of ecclesiastical power and royal patronage. According to Ertman, bribery, embezzlement and influence peddling declined under Cromwell but returned when Charles II was restored to the throne. In his narrative, the Protectorate and Interregnum was a period of rationalization forestalled by the return of the monarchy. The economic reforms initiated by Sir George Downing and Samuel Pepys secured the conditions for accountable government through public financing of the crown's debt, representing the triumph of reformist interests (Ertman, 1997:190-1). On one hand, Puritans are cast in their typical (Whig) role of reformers. The resurgence of religious persecution during the Restoration can be understood as resistance to modernizing reform through the re-entrenchment of royalist supporters and the reestablishment of patrimonial administrative practices.

However, religion can also be understood as a factor in the shaping the perception of corruption, given Calvinist opposition to the elaborate ecclesiastical displays of the Anglican church and the lavishness and licentiousness of the monarchy. Religious conflict in this account can be understood as a proxy for the political struggle between the Parliament and the crown, between the old regime and the impulse to establish a more rational and efficient system of government. However, Ertman never discusses religion

Coercion and the Modern State for its neglect of political culture, political theory and religion in "A Millenium of European State Formation," *International Review of Social History*, 40 (1995) pp. 425-41. J.D. Clark, "Protestantism, Nationalism and National Identity, 1660-1832," *The Historical Journal*, 43, 1 (2000a), pp. 249-276.

overtly.

Phillip Gorski's *The Disciplinary Revolution* is a notable exception to the general neglect of religion *qua* religion in social science literature on the development of the modern state. Drawing on Foucault's conception of governance, Gorski demonstrates that the disciplinary capacity of Calvinist practice in the Netherlands gave the state considerable overall strength relative to its weakly centralized government. Religion solves many coordination and compliance problems in a weakly bureaucratized state by engaging neighbor to neighbor relationships toward promoting conformity, and by providing an institutional structure for communication, tax collection and population control. Gorski asserts that the Calvinist model of the religious community promoted political strength in Holland by providing a vision of social control, and an ideology and institutional network through which to achieve it (2003). His work is exceptional in its consideration of religion as both an ideational and a material force in shaping political life.

Anthony Marx, in *Faith in Nation, Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, attributes a nationalizing role to religion in the early modern English state. Specifically he sees the construction of a Catholic out-group as a mechanism through which the monarchy fostered a Protestant national identity to generate support for geopolitical competition. Marx's definition of nationalism in this context is an explicitly civic sentiment rather than an ideological movement. Faith is instrumentalized toward uniting the masses in a common identity that serves the project of the ruler. While Marx sheds scholarly light on the importance of religion in state consolidation in early modern England, his analysis of religion as a unidirectional, top down process precludes

consideration of the dynamic through which communities constituted themselves in religious terms. As Anthony Smith points out, the model of engaging a populace through ceremonial celebration of collective identity that Marx describes has much earlier historical precedent (2005). The link between the ‘illiberal’ origins of the nation state and the ‘liberal’ outcome of the long term process that Marx attempts to establish is not explained by the introduction of an exclusionary process of identity construction. Rather, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the conceptual and institutional redefinition that occurred during this period came about through contentious interactions between what Marx and others identify as a nationalizing narrative and popular resistance.

Religion and Nationalism

The role of nationalism in state development is more commonly analyzed with the presumption that religion was no longer a significant force within society. Nationalism is often understood as the functional equivalent of religion; it provided a discourse of belonging to an imagined community once religion no longer held sway over people’s lives (Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). Nationalism in social science literature generally refers to a specific discourse of political power devised in continental Europe during the 19th century that took a culturally and linguistically homogenous ‘people’ as the proper basis for a polity.³² Elie Kedourie, for example, identifies nationalism as an Enlightenment invention of German Romantics. They envisioned the state as a corporate representative of the people, and drew a sharp distinction between the state as a rational, ethical sphere and the eros bound relationships

³² Liah Greenfeld, whose work is discussed in this section, is an exception to the nineteenth century dating of nationalism.

and highly circumscribed, hierarchical social roles that characterized earlier political entities (Kedourie 1993, Gellner 1983). In this construal, nationalism proceeds from economic development and is both a challenge to the old social order and a reflection of its collapse. John Breuilly parses nationalisms into a variety of types that may occur under different political conditions. The common feature in the three types of nationalism he identifies: secessionist, unifying, reformist, is intent to mobilize, coordinate and legitimate support for the capture of state power (1982).

In these accounts, religion is the supporting narrative of the old regime. Scholars generally understand nationalist narratives, by contrast, to mark a new conception of the political community. Where religious narratives justified power and obligation – social as well as political – nationalist narratives established criteria of membership and justification for political participation and rights. Nationalist narratives are tied to a modern notion of the state and society in their recognition of the masses as a political force, and grounding of political legitimacy in popular will. These narratives fell into two broad categories distinguished on the basis of their conception of citizenship: 1) a universalist discourse of rights guaranteed to members of a territorially defined political unit, 2) a discourse of linguistic and cultural commonality as the basis of political membership and popular sovereignty. Anti-imperial movements in the nineteenth century frequently employed the latter narrative to galvanize popular resistance to cultural suppression. Charles Tilly, who generally shares the modernist dating of nation and nationalism to the late eighteenth century, notes two conditions under which demands for political autonomy in the name of ‘a nation’ occurred: 1) When empires sought to impose official religions on dissenting minorities, 2) When empires strengthened central control

over populations that had previously enjoyed autonomy through weak imperial administrators or indirect rule (1996). A general feature of ‘nationalism’ is the claiming of a distinctive feature of a population as a determinant of political membership. This definition distinguishes the modern concept of the nation from the term’s conception with respect to religion and law that is very much evident in seventeenth century discourse and before.³³ Yet the definition also suitably captures the discourse of political membership from at least the mid-seventeenth century in England, in which religion was the central feature of the political commonality.

The English case confounds a clear distinction between nationalist narratives as a modern phenomena, and religious narratives as a marker of the old regime. Recent historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth century English context shows that the pattern of political mobilization and resistance on the basis of religion, and the conception of religion as a defining feature of political membership fit the larger pattern of late eighteenth and nineteenth century nationalisms. In early modern England religion was a clear analogue to ethnicity as a discourse of membership and right. It provided not only a collective identity, but also a shared, progressive, political project.³⁴ John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, for example, was both an elective myth establishing the continuity of

³³ J.D. Clark in “Protestantism, Nationalism and National Identity, 1660-1832”, *The Historical Journal*, 43, I (2000a) pp.249-276 reviews recent literature on the role of Protestantism in nation formation in early modern England. Clark argues that a clear national identity understood in religious terms dates to at least as early as the thirteenth century.

³⁴ Miroslav Hroch identifies three qualities that are essential to a nation: “(1) a memory of some common past, treated as a ‘destiny’ of the group – or at least of its core constituents; (2) a density of linguistic or cultural ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group than beyond it; (3) a conception of the equality of all members of the group organized as civil society.” Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe," in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed. *Mapping the Nation* (1996:79).

Protestantism through the ages, and a distinct set of national heroes – over half of whom were agricultural laborers.³⁵ Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* provided Protestant England with a unique history that defined the nature and purpose of the English nation in the present. This history, in conjunction with a set of uniform practices, rituals and experiences, became the basis of an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Religion was the primary mechanism for creating, sustaining and challenging political boundaries. On one hand, it provided the discourse within which political membership was imagined. But the church also linked individual experience to state politics by enforcing fiscal and behavioral obligations. How people experienced themselves and regarded others was influenced by a dynamic interaction between local and national power negotiated through the churches. As the primary source of the state's regulatory and disciplinary capacity in the provinces, the church was critical to establishing a national frame of political membership. The state, meanwhile, actively created a common political identity by imposing a standardized religious practice. As Tilly's observations make clear, a 'nation' is constituted not just by a discourse of commonality but by institutional structuring of people's lives in common.³⁶

Nonetheless, this dimension of religion has been little developed within the larger literature on nationalism. Gellner, for example, sees religion as contributing to the

³⁵ See Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*. London: Methuen 1981:194-5.

³⁶ The importance of institutional power in boundary articulation is developed by Rogers Smith in "Which Comes First Ideas or Institutions," in *Rethinking Political Institutions: The Art of the State*, ed. Ian Shapiro, Stephen Skowronek, and Daniel Galvin (New York University Press, 2006), pp. 91-113. and "Law's Races," in *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances*, ed. Seyla Benhabib, Ian Shapiro, and Danilo Petranovic (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 362-385. And by Charles Tilly in *Identities, Boundaries and Social* (2005).

development of nationalism in the Weberian sense of its promotion of capitalism through the provision of new cognitive frames of action. In his view nationalist movements furthered secularization by constructing the nation in terms of ethnicity, rather than religion. Religious innovation engendered these movements by facilitating economic changes that reduced religion's power as an organizing social principle. (Gellner 1983). Under capitalism, he argues, religion is an insufficient basis for the "cultural machinery" that gives coherence to society. Narratives of social meaning and membership could no longer be grounded in religious authority if they were to provide the cognitive flexibility necessary to an industrializing economy. Nationalism marks a transition from a religious culture to one grounded in itself rather than mediated by or in service to religion. Protestantism, because of its emphasis on scripturalism, democratization of the sacred, and individualism was intimately linked to the emergence of the industrial world (1983:142). It laid the basis for a specialized economy by promoting literacy and putting people in an equal, unmediated state before God. Drawing on Weber, Gellner argues against economic determinism in political development, by demonstrating that institutional, cultural and cognitive changes preceded economic transformation, and in turn drove further developments in those spheres.

Other scholars have paid less attention to the specific role of religious doctrine in forging the conditions of nationalism. For much of the twentieth century scholars agreed that nationalism was a consequence of modernity. Karl Deutsch (1953), Benedict Anderson (1983), Mark Jurgensmeyer (1993) and Anthony Giddens (1987:116), like Gellner emphasize the importance of technologies of communication and state capacity in fostering nationalism, but they do not consider the impact of the state church on these

dimensions of governance. Anderson characterizes the nation as an ‘imagined community’ that came about through print media, which made possible experience of simultaneity and cohesion among disparate populations through a shared relationship to language and text. “From the start,” he contends, “the nation was conceived in language, not in blood” (1983:145). But while Anderson attributes this phenomenon to the British empire and constructions of homeland among ex-patriot communities in the colonies, John Marshall’s recent work demonstrates that transnational communities of print developed much earlier out of concern for liberty of conscience and the proper balance between political and religious communities (2006). The self-authored nation that Anderson presumes was constructed on the ashes of the “sacral monarchy” was forged first through religious resistance to monarchical extension of power. Print technologies made such debates broadly available and made it possible for people at a geographical distance from one another to see their structural commonality with respect to monarchical power.

Jurgensmeyer argues that the modern understanding of nationalism, as “the ideological ally of the nation-state” did not appear in England or on the American continent until the Eighteenth century when “the nation state [became] a source of coherence socially and politically to nurture ideological loyalty of its own (1993:383). In his comparison of religious conflict past and present he contends that emergent states are confronting the same competition between religion and nationalism that early states did. However, this critically mischaracterizes the English situation, which was a competition among religious visions within a national context, rather than one between religious and secular values. The association of the religious vision with the past and the nationalist

with the new promotes a view of religiosity as a continuation of an older cultural mode, rather than seeing it as cultural innovation in response to political change.

Liah Greenfeld reverses the traditional line of argument that modernization led to nationalism, asserting instead that English nationalism facilitated capitalist development. She recognizes the early appearance of nationalism in England in religious narratives – dating to the sixteenth century – but she claims that England was wholly secular by the seventeenth century (2001). Historians on the other hand, argue that during the seventeenth century England had a distinctly Protestant national culture (Collison 1988, Helgerson 1992, Hoyle 2007, McEachern 1996, Pincus 1996). They point to the diversity of religious practice and the importance of magic and folk ritual in Medieval Christianity (Duffy 1992:278, Thomas 1971) and the movement toward cultural uniformity through religion (Muchembled 1984). As Gorski (2000) and others have pointed out, the seventeenth century was a period of de-differentiation between state and church functions. It cannot be plausibly represented as secular, in terms of either popular attitudes and beliefs or separation of church-state functions.

The secularization thesis is chief among the factors that have impeded exploration of the relationship between religion and nationalism and religion and political development more broadly. This argument, which Gorski identifies as a family of theories of religious change (2000), alleges variably that religion disappeared (Comte)³⁷,

³⁷ Comte regarded the process as one of steady ‘demythologization’ of worldviews with the ascendance of science and technology over traditional beliefs. Like Hegel he believed in the revelatory power of history and a progressive realization of ideas and institutions. The progress of science had undermined the collective basis for shared knowledge in the old regime; a new ‘positive religion’ was necessary to reconstitute a public realm of meaning on the basis of (discoverable) scientific laws of human behavior. See Auguste Comte. *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (1858).

declined (Weber)³⁸, was privatized (Luckmann)³⁹ or was transformed (Parsons)⁴⁰ as a consequence of modernization (Wallis and Bruce 2001).⁴¹ In secularization theory nationalism is understood as a modern phenomena that replaces the function religion once served in society, and the decline of religion is presumed to be explained by the economic changes that occasioned modernity itself. Secularism is both a marker of modernity and an inevitable consequence of economic change, and its concomitant technological innovation and scale shift in social orientation. The idea of the nation as the ethical instantiation of the corporate will, conceptualized as the “general will” by Rousseau, “the categorical imperative” by Kant or the “actuality of the ethical Idea” by

³⁸ In Weber’s analysis secularization is consequence of differentiation of religion and political functions as the state and market develop institutional autonomy, which leads to rationalization that in turn fosters further differentiation (1966).

³⁹ Luckmann argues that religious views become untenable in the face of the increased social complexity that proceeds from social differentiation. The increasing difficulty of maintaining religious views in an ever more complex public sphere drives religion into the private realm. Luckmann distinguishes between religious decline and secularization. He argues that with modernization, transcendent experiences are increasingly found in small events rather than in collective ritual. Religious passions, however, may remain strong within a contained sphere of expression. (1967).

⁴⁰ Parsons saw religion as merely having adapted to new conditions. Collective notions of the sacred are not absent from modern life but expressed differently. Robert Bellah essentially shares this view in his understanding of “American civil religion” in which the political is the sacred community (1974).

⁴¹ “Stated briefly the secularization thesis asserts that modernization (itself no simple concept) brings in its wake (and may itself be accelerated by) ‘the diminution of the social significance of religion’.” The authors identify three salient features of modernization: social differentiation, societalization, and rationalization. Social differentiation refers to specialization of labor and delegation of social tasks. Societalization entails the increasing organization of social life materially and conceptually at the societal (i.e. national) rather than the local level. As Bryan Wilson argues, societalization strips religion of its role in celebrating and legitimating local life. Finally, rationalization is a change in the way that people think, and thus act, in societies transformed by the previous forces. Technological innovation, which gave people greater command over the material world, also promoted rationalization by reducing the need for supernatural explanations and their relative plausibility. R. Wallis and S. Bruce. “Secularization: The Orthodox Model,” in Bruce, S. (ed.) *Religion and Modernization* (2001:8-15).

Hegel imagines this collective as the transcendence of local particularity and attachments. As Hegel put it, “The essence of the modern state is that the universal should be linked with the complete freedom of particularity and the well-being of individuals, and hence that the interest of the family and of civil society must become focused on the state” (1821:260). The modern nation-state would be the rational recognition of common interest, and regulation of public life in terms of objectivity, truth and the ethical development of individuals. To the degree that nationalisms served as either a critique of the hierarchical, static relations in earlier forms of political organization or evidence of their demise, secularization is implicit in the concept.

The construction of religion as a conceptual opposite to ‘reason’ that provided supernatural explanations of obligation and right was part of an Enlightenment project to which many early observers of secularization were politically committed.⁴² Comte, Marx, and Freud all drew upon the ideas of Kant and Hegel that societies would grow out of the need for magical explanations as rationality came to the fore.⁴³ Science would remedy social ills and free people from various enslavements to and through tradition. Secularization may have been more of a political agenda than an observable phenomena in the nineteenth century but the reformers’ vision moved into the twentieth century as historical fact. Anderson is a typical heir to this tradition of knowledge in his confident

⁴² Samuel Preus argues that before the 16th century religion was not clearly articulated as a category of social life. The distinction between rationality and irrationality referred to Christian mysteries that were only accessible through revelation and those that were rationally perceptible (1987).

⁴³ See Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason* (1793). G.F.W. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821); Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *German Ideology* (1932).

assertion that the dawn of nationalism came at the “dusk of religious modes of thought” (1983:11).

Historiography and the Weberian Legacy

Until recently secularization theory presumed that the Reformation disrupted a prior uniformity of religious practice, which in turn gave rise to religious pluralism. Pluralism then undermined the viability of religion as a source of social cohesion, and other narratives (notably nationalism) arose to replace the function previously served by religion. The simple story is clearly not substantiated. Neither the initial condition of religious uniformity nor the subsequent marginalization of religion bear historical scrutiny. Significant historical scholarship since the 1960s has undermined the presumption of religious unity in the pre-Reformation period by demonstrating a great deal of local variation and frequent blending of pagan practices with official Christian doctrine (Duffy 1992, Thomas 1971, Le Bras 1956, Delumeau 1977). The core of secularization theory, however, is the differentiation between religious and nonreligious authority referred to by Stepan at the beginning of the chapter. But here as well, the theory does not easily match up with the historical record. As Gorski points out, “differentiation of the three major churches (Lutheran, Reformed and Catholic) during the Reformation went hand-in-hand with a de-differentiation among church, state and society at the territorial level” (Gorski 2000:143). Gorski’s observation echoes that of Weber, to whom a more nuanced view of secularization is largely indebted:

It is necessary to note, what has often been forgotten, that the Reformation meant not the elimination of the Church’s control over everyday life, but rather the substitution of a new form of control for the previous one. It meant the repudiation of a control that was very lax, at that time scarcely perceptible in practice, and

hardly more than formal, in favor of a regulation of the whole of conduct which, penetrating to all departments of private and public life, was infinitely burdensome and earnestly enforced (1905: 36).

For Weber two factors led to secularization, and both were a consequence of Protestant doctrine. As mentioned previously, he understood Protestant asceticism to have promoted religion's undoing as a public script by facilitating the development of capitalism. It provided new justifications for action that enabled believers to adapt their behavior to wage labor - essentially to work more than was necessary to maintain an existing way of life. Protestant asceticism also promoted secularization by providing a 'modernizing ethic'. Weber distinguishes Protestantism as a "moralizing faith of action" from 'cultic' (Asiatic) religions, among which he includes Islam, that were world accepting rather than world rejecting systems. Protestant Christianity was doctrinally compatible with the modern state in ways that other religions were not because of its emphasis on moral action for its own sake rather than out of compliance with a particular tradition of rules or as a means to realize worldly benefit.

Weber draws on Kant's idea of what a rational religion might look like to describe the nature and impact of Protestantism as a modernizing ethic. A modern religion in Kant's terms is distinct from ritual practices and petitions for favor or protection because it compels people to strive for salvation on the basis of faith alone. A modern religion commands people to act morally without assurance or reward. In this respect it is compatible with Enlightenment ideals: Christian faith called people to freedom from childish dependency on God. The church was formed on the basis of revealed truth, but human maturity required rational recognition of the ends of action and voluntary submission to the conditions of their realization. For Kant, the tension in Christianity

between a divine vision and the impossibility of its worldly confirmation promoted the development of a religion of pure reason. Unlike religions (such as Catholicism) that were “grounded upon dogmas, needs and ... susceptible of organization by men... the pure religion of reason would have, as its servants (yet without their being officials) all right thinking men.” A rule bound observation of faith would be replaced by a “faith orientated toward its own irrelevance” and lead to “the self overcoming of the church in its historical manifestation” (1793: 90, 115). A rational religion would neither be bound to tradition, be exclusive to a particular group, nor exchange obedience for existential comfort. It would push humanity beyond these old ways of being and open the possibility of progressive change by grounding morality in reason.

Kant’s rational religion further informs Weber’s assessment of the salutary effect of Protestantism on the development of the modern state by promoting differentiation of church and state function. Weber’s distinction between “Asiatic” religions as ‘cultic’ and Calvinism as a moralizing faith of action is derived directly from Kant’s ideal of a rational religion (Turner). “Asiatic” religions, as world accepting systems, were oriented toward comfort and worldly reward and thus were more likely to develop caesaropapist states in which religion and state were undifferentiated. In contrast to the self disciplined, rational individual believers fostered by Protestantism, Islam, for example, “often produced a complete obliviousness to self, in the interest of fulfillment of the religious commandment of holy war for the conquest of the world” (Weber 1978: 573).

Weber’s analysis of Islam clearly suffers from nineteenth century bias and he is often criticized for relying on ideal types rather than viewing religious discourse as a dynamic interaction between beliefs and context. However his characterization of ‘cultic’

religions, particularly Islam, as singular and timeless discourses contrasts sharply with his methodological commitment to understand both the intention and the context of human action. The religious ethos he attributes to Islam is a hybrid of two different periods presented as singular in causality (the Mecca period creates a tendency to withdraw from the world while the Medina period creates a military asceticism). His categories are also questionable because he defines Protestantism from within a tradition of thought as the ideal manifestation of that tradition. The ‘Asiatic’ religions, on the other hand, are defined without the same degree of intimacy, as rough caricatures lacking doctrinal nuance or temporal and geographical variation.

Weber’s analytic emphasis on the uniqueness of Protestant doctrine in promoting the modern state has left a lasting legacy on the study of religion and political development. His explanation is an important elaboration of the interaction between economic change and cultural narratives that inform individual action. It improved upon structural (Marxist) explanations that presumed economic determinism by providing a plausible link between micro processes and macro change. However, despite Weber’s recognition that the Reformation occasioned significant dedifferentiation of church and state, he does not consider the institutional context in which variations of Protestant doctrine developed or to which they responded. Weber’s attribution of differentiation to the dualism within Protestant doctrine has been reproduced in numerous discussions of contemporary questions of religion and politics.⁴⁴ Where modern “western” states failed to emerge in accordance with modernization theory, culture was a readily available

⁴⁴ For a sampling of these arguments see *World Religions and Democracy*. Larry Diamond, Marc Plattner and Philip Costopoulos (eds.) Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

explanation for their intractability: “Asiatic” religions must be the cause; they must not provide the conceptual tools to forge political resistance against authoritarian rule or motivate economic production for its own sake.

The most prominent of these explanations is Samuel Huntington’s in *The Third Wave* (1991) and *Clash of Civilizations* (1997), which consider religion to have an enduring and autonomous influence on political change. Like Weber, Huntington conceptualizes ‘religions’ in terms of singular narratives of authority and action that he derives from theological doctrine. Also as with Weber, the implicit recognition of the protean nature of religion necessary to his understanding of the positive legacy of Protestantism contrasts sharply with his treatment of Islam. Protestantism is clearly interpreted, contested, adapted and employed within particular social contexts – although neither Huntington nor Weber elaborate the dynamic between political institutions and religious narratives – while Islam is considered determinative of social being. With Weber this is not merely a consequence of an inconsistent application of methodological principle but of the definitions he applies to different types of religions. Protestantism is, by virtue of its doctrinal dualism, an adaptive transformative force, while Islam and other “Asiatic” religions foster a tradition bound, backward looking orientation that can at best support the status quo.

Both Weber and Huntington point to the interaction between institutional and cultural factors in shaping the direction of innovation in either realm. Weber notes the impact of the Reformation in consolidating political power on the basis of religious narratives (1978: 480). Huntington’s earlier work, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), identified the dispersion of power in ‘backward’ states as a fundamentally

different from the distribution of power in states whose political trajectories were the basis for modernization theory. He contends that the critical distinction among countries “concerns not their form of government but their degree of government” (1968:1). While modernization theory predicted that economic and social development would lead to democratization, Huntington observed that the process of differentiation could result in political disorder and decay rather than increased political representation and accountability if it outpaced the capacity of the state to maintain order. In societies where the state was not popularly understood as the organizing force in social life the increased capacity of individuals to seek their interests through political power as a result of expanded education, technology and mobility would not yield democracy but political violence.

However, given the tendency within both Huntington and Weber to essentialize religion as a narrative of identity and authority – rather than to see religion as a realm in which these aspects of life are negotiated – both focus on the type of people religions foster as their locus of causality in social and political development. Why particular interpretations become ascendant at a given time and how they interact with projects to establish political power are not considered in their explanations. Nonetheless, Huntington’s observations indicate that how the state comes to be accepted as the legitimate arbiter of social relations rather than the family, clan or war lord is an essential aspect of democratization. How, as Burke put it, does the nation subsume more immediate social relations such that “the love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. IV, 218. (1791) p. 290.

The importance of the conceptual centrality of the state to liberal democratic institutions is a fraught subject given both the Lockean conception of government as emerging from existing social organization and the grim record of statist ideologies with respect to human rights. The association of militant nationalism with illiberal practices and forms of governance complicates historical investigation of the role of collective identity formation in democratization, and the role of religion in both processes. The deification of the state in fascism for example, or the monopolistic claim to truth that accompanies some forms of nationalism tend to be associated with undifferentiated church-state authority. Both the enlightenment conception of the nation as a realm of rational social relations and the association of religion with traditional (irrational) undifferentiated authority get in the way of clear conceptualization of the role of religion in forging national collectives.

The presumption of secularization and mistrust of religious movements as backward looking or undemocratic biases investigation of their democratizing potential. Some studies (Poland: Kubik (1994), Latin America: Nepstad 2004, US Civil Rights movement: Williams 2003) clearly demonstrate the power of religious resources and frames of membership to galvanize collective action and promote transitions from authoritarian rule. Some of those same cases however, articulate the feared anti-liberal aspects of religious narratives of membership and the manner in which they may challenge the effective operation of liberal democratic institutions. The presumption in the dominant liberal framework is that religious beliefs shape the psycho-social orientation of individuals toward political power and impair their ability to tolerate outcomes that may not accord with an absolute sense of right fostered by the religion, or

that they might impose restrictions on social behavior that are out of step with liberal democratic principles of equal rights and personal liberty.

Overcoming Legacies, Integrating Revisionist Historiography

A persistent problem in the literature on the early modern state is the tendency to project backward a modern notion of state capacity onto undifferentiated state function. Michael Braddick's *State Formation in Early Modern England 1550-1700* (2000), overcomes this problem by considering the state as an emergent social process in several arenas of life rather than as centralized institutions that reflected the interests and strategic choices of elites. He divides the state into four forms: patriarchal, confessional, fiscal military and dynastic that develop in response to particular problems. The patriarchal state addressed the pressures from increased population and poverty noted in Goldstone's analysis. As magisterial oversight of various aspects of life increased, the opportunities to use the judicial process expanded to a broader segment of the population.

Braddick presents a view of state development that includes its positive role in the lives of subject/citizens: "law was not simply an instrument used to discipline and regulate social life from outside. Government provided a resource, and a tool that could be manipulated, even for those of fairly humble status" (2000:164). His discussion of the patriarchal state as a local phenomenon co-evolving with demands from the center moves beyond the predatory model of the state that understands power as moving in a single direction to advance specific (geopolitical) interests. By considering the fiscal-military and confessional aspects of the state in relation to its increasing patriarchal role he provides an alternative framework for conceptualizing state power and popular relation to

it. Along with the work of Zaller, *The Discourse of legitimacy in Early modern England* (2007) and Gorski (2000), Braddick provides a context for thinking about the increased purview of the state over people's daily lives, and particularly the role of the church as a mechanism for promoting social conformity and political control. The conceptualization of the state as more than a unidirectional flow of power driven by geopolitical competition also provides a more complex picture of state strength that accounts for divergence of internal capacity to promote conformity and fiscal-military power.

Much of the scholarly consideration of religion and state rests on Weber's understanding of differentiation – something that he attributed to distinction within the religion resulting from post-Reformation political development. As he points out, the Reformation first yielded de-differentiation of religion and state functions in England, yet the result was the articulation of political rights and a significant change in the conception of government. In order to make sense of this one needs to distinguish state capacity from the symbolic forms and structure through which political authority was legitimated. As we will see from popular debates and the concerns of preachers and petitioners, the confessional state awakened national awareness in people both through its propagation of a political identity and through its regulation of daily life.

The century and a half from Henry VIII to the English Revolution was, as Tim Harris has demonstrated, characterized by the rise of mass politics. People were no longer hierarchically contained by feudal structures and the relevance of the monarchy to the daily life of individuals was much greater than it had ever been. Braddick, for example, asserts, “one of the key changes in the 16th and 17th centuries was the shift in identities of gentry in the various localities from being merely local landowners with local interests to

being local landowners with local and national loyalties and interests (2000:2). The significance of national politics to non-landed trades people is also evident in print media from the period. Pamphlets and newspapers were circulated and read aloud in taverns. This is why, as Harris points out, the beheading of Charles I was of popular consequence in a way that the six regicides in the two hundred years prior had not been (Harris 1995). The regicide occasioned widespread anxiety about political stability because the monarchy had become a point of political concern among people at all levels of society. As Geoffrey Elton argues, the “Tudor Revolution in monarchy” was a precondition of modern revolution (1969:3). Before Henry VIII, capture of the monarchy did not involve the whole society because its institutional scope was limited to landed elites. Rebellion against Charles I was a totalizing event because of changes in the range and character of political power during the previous century (Zaller 2007; Harris, Seaward, and Goldie 1990).

The state church, with its *Book of Common Prayer* and weekly sermons, was a major point of popular contact with the monarchy and the primary vehicle for its expansion of power. The imposition of religious uniformity was one of the tools employed by Elizabeth I to strengthen the position of the crown by promoting political unity, and to preserve social discipline as older structures of order collapsed. Mandated attendance at Church of England services and the church’s control over licensing and censorship of printed material uniquely positioned the pulpit to propagate information and shape political discourse. Religious passions conjoined localist and legal constitutionalist critiques of government to provide the “momentum and passion” to incite political conflict (Morrill 1984) precisely because religious practice was the locus

of popular experience of expanding state power.

From the historiography of early modern England we can make several observations about the role of religion in public life that challenge the general assumptions in comparative historical analysis regarding religion and political development. First, religion remained a salient feature in political and social life. Secondly, religious conflict intensified as the seventeenth century progressed. Thirdly, religion was not a proxy for class interest but an organizing principle of social life unto itself. Sectarian commitments cut across class. Puritans and non-Puritans were fairly similar in their socio-economic distribution (Spufford 1995, Plumb 1995, Marsh, 1995) and dissenters were not as marginalized from society as was previously assumed. (Spufford 1995, Collison 1995, Stevenson 1995, Sharpe 2000). Fourthly, religion was a form of institutional as well as ideational power. Monarchs used religious institution to promote uniformity of belief and practice as well as to monitor social behavior, to generate revenue and to address growing social problems such as poverty. Finally, religion was a tool of political power at the local level through which people could improve their own financial status or seek vengeance by accusing their neighbors of nonconformity and benefit from their imprisonment and dispossession. Importantly, for non-conformists religion provided a language and justification for resisting the encroachment of centralizing political power upon local autonomy, while for local leadership of all confessional orientations it was a means of addressing a host of social problems.

The general omission of the religious character of the events and discourse during this period from analysis of institutions and political processes has significant

consequences for how we understand modernity and the relationship between religion and democratization. Modernization theory is based on the assumption that economic changes influence democratization by changing the interest calculus of inclusion. As more people have the resources to make demands for political inclusion the costs to the dominant group of maintaining a monopoly over power increases to the point of unsustainability (Dahl 1972, Boix and Stokes 2003). The ideas of elites, and of the population more broadly, have been recognized by some to be part of these changes (Dahl 1972), as have the discourses available to inform collective action (Sewell 2005; McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow 2001; Swidler 1995; Johnston and Klandermans 1995). Both the assumption that religion was a negligible force in political and social life before the consolidation of the nation-state and rise of a capital based economy, and the more nuanced Weberian view that religion led to its own demise by contributing to these processes, foreclose consideration of the process through which religion shaped elite opinion and collective action toward the articulation of liberal principles of governance. In the former narrative religion played no part whatsoever, in the latter its effect is through the specific character of Christian theology.

Given the persistence of religious passions in the seventeenth century, and their tendency toward monopolistic claims to truth rather than principled toleration, the important questions for understanding the relationship of religion to liberal political development are what substantive changes occurred institutionally and in popular discourse during the seventeenth century and how they relate to religious narratives of membership and authority. Before turning to this question we must first consider explanations of why (and if) religious competition led to religious tolerance.

The Origins of Toleration?

The history of toleration is central to “Whig” accounts of the uniqueness of western civilization. While nineteenth century historians bolstered contemporary political goals by presenting them as part of a longstanding tradition – casting innovation as mere extension of existing principles and part of inherited entitlements – twentieth century historians found in the same stories a past that distinguished Anglo-American culture from fascist and communist authoritarianism. Historians such as W.K. Jordan, A. S. P. Woodhouse, Samuel Gardiner and William Haller cemented the link between Protestantism and liberal ideas. The legacy of the Protestant Reformation, they contended, was a lineage of great thinkers whose vision of governance guided the world into the light of modernity. In these accounts society had grown tolerant through a process of secularization and the rise of scientific rationalism. The *Act of Toleration* (1689) secured an existing consensus about the right of conscience, and in conjunction with the bloodless revolution set England on a course of progressive realization of liberal ideals.⁴⁶

This view was roundly challenged by a new generation of historians whose research focused on local practices and the opinions of the moderate middle rather than the extremes (Grell, Israel, and Tyacke 1991). Mark Goldie, for example, asserts that “Restoration England was a persecuting society” (1984:331). Other scholars who share his view argue that the *Act of Toleration* (1689) was inconsequential, given the persistence of religious persecution well into the 18th century (Clark 2000b, Haydon

⁴⁶ For comprehensive reviews of the histories of toleration see Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2006 and John Coffey,

1993). Recent work by William Gibson, however, challenges blanket characterization of the extent of religious persecution by demonstrating that the degree of (in)toleration varied considerably across locale (2007).⁴⁷ Some scholars support the perspective that toleration was far from a principled consensus in the 1680s, but argue that the *Act of Toleration* (1689) was nonetheless an important political milestone. John Marshall's exhaustive treatment of the politics of toleration in the 1680s shows that persecution rose during the latter half of the seventeenth century – Parliament twice considered reinstating the statute under which heretics were burned at the stake a century earlier – and was inconstant with respect to target and locale (2006). Marshall nonetheless emphasizes the importance of transnational faith communities both as intellectual and financial resources that fed public debate, and in shaping in-group perceptions of the dangers of toleration or the threat of persecution.⁴⁸

Marshall's research supports many previous arguments that the *Act of Toleration* was an expedient solution to intractable political conflict rather than a principled recognition of a universal right. Ashcraft (1992), Schochet (1992); and Murphy (2003) emphasize the importance of expediency over principle, and demonstrate the

⁴⁷ In *Religion and the Enlightenment 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton* (2007) Gibson argues that the siege of Taunton by royalists in 1645 created a powerful tradition of collective dissent that was drawn upon to inspired resistance in subsequent experience with state pressure. He demonstrates the changing theologies of the dissenters who gathered there from uncompromising Puritanism to moderate nonconformity that endorsed an encompassing toleration. Taunton's dissenting academies were the source of a "message of reason, tolerance and enlightenment" (274) that spread throughout England.

⁴⁸ Marshall presents evidence that the spectacle of religious violence and intolerance toward Protestants in Ireland and France influenced the perception of danger in Britain and the Netherlands, significantly informing Locke's ideas about toleration, particularly their adamant exclusion of Catholics. The persecution of the Huguenots in France and the Waldensians in the Piedmont loomed large in (Protestant) popular imagination as indicators of their likely fate under a Catholic monarch.

philosophical chasm between toleration as construed by the bill and contemporary notions of religious liberty. Others, notably Nicholas Tyacke (1991), who develops the political and legal history of the bill, highlight the principled commitment to toleration of its proponents in the context of the compromises required for it to win sufficient support.

Alexandra Walsham's excellent book, *Charitable Hatred*, chronicles the history of religious tolerance and persecution as practices that were "dialectically and symbiotically linked" (2006:5), rather than as reflecting polarized political programs. Toleration and persecution are both tied to the terms in which a particular collective is constituted and the conditions it regards as fundamental to its persistence and stability. She argues that from 1500-1700 no religious group abandoned the idea of religious uniformity. Her analysis also emphasizes the variation in practice across locales, and demonstrates the way policies around religious conformity fostered local incentives for intolerance. John Marshall supports her claim that toleration was not an articulated social value, but was conditioned upon the terms in which a community was constituted. He presents evidence that in the wake of the *Act of Toleration* there was a new emphasis on public behavior and social morality, including public intoxication and sexuality, which drew little public censure during periods when one could be dispossessed and imprisoned for holding the wrong prayer book. Catholic participation in public life also continued to be curtailed by the *Test Act* and the *Corporation Act* until the nineteenth century, and toleration of non-Christians was not even considered. The dominant groups – those who would become Anglicans and Presbyterians – were demonstrably intolerant. However, as the toleration debates demonstrate, there were significant arguments among nonconformists for separation of church and state from the end of the sixteenth century. It

may be true that every sect regarded religion as an essential aspect of social life through the seventeenth century. But contrary to Walsham's assertion, the way religious groups understood the relationship between religious and civil authority varied. Some regarded religious authority as best located at the local level, and thus resisted national regulation of religious practice. Others saw the magistrate as having no proper role in religious affairs whatsoever.

Several recent works have reaffirmed the Whig narrative of progressively expanding toleration. John Coffey's *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England* (2000), reasserts the claim that toleration did in fact progress chronologically. Coffey recognizes that the revisionists provided an important corrective to the idea that the 1689 *Act of Toleration* merely codified a principle and practice that had gained broad social acceptance by the seventeenth century. However, he considers the revisionists' dismissal of the *Act of Toleration* as inconsequential to be too extreme. He contends that principled arguments for toleration were both long-standing and significant to the debates surrounding the Act itself. In *Beyond the Persecuting Society*, Laursen and Nederman also argue that pre-Enlightenment England was not as persecuting as is commonly understood, and that Locke's views in *Letter Concerning Toleration* were unremarkable. Nederman reasserts the old argument that the rise of liberalism in the 17th century provided the conceptual principles on which the pragmatic gains of the Reformation could be grounded. These claims do not stand up against evidence of persecution of non-conformists. Mark Goldie's work on the plight of Catholics during the Restoration also provides strong evidence against generalized claims that England was tolerant.

Some scholars trace the origins of toleration through particular traditions of ideas

or through the work of particular thinkers. Gary Remer and Perez Zagorin both highlight the importance of the humanist tradition to the idea of religious toleration, and both carefully assert that these ideas were most powerfully conveyed by devout believers. Remer's *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (1996), argues against the traditional view that toleration was a consequence of the growing influence of rationalism, and reflective of the Enlightenment belief that religion was a matter of individual conscience. Remer highlights the religiosity of the humanists and their justification of religious toleration through Aristotle and Cicero, rather than through right to conscience. In *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (2005), Zagorin challenges religious indifference and political expediency as explanations for toleration, arguing instead that the conceptualization and justification for toleration were the critical factors,

For in a certain sense ideas rule the world, and the attitudes and actions of human beings are greatly affected by reasons and justifications. In the absence of convincing reasons showing why toleration is right and desirable, the institutional accommodation and the change in individual and social values needed to establish it could hardly occur (2005:12).

The heroes of Zagorin's account are sixteenth century Christian humanists such as Sebastian Castellio, Dirck Coonhert, Jacobus Arminius, and Hugo Grotius, and seventeenth century thinkers such as Baruch Spinoza, John Locke and Pierre Bayle as well as Laudian dissenter and founder of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, Leveller supporter and Arminian theologian John Goodwin, Leveller William Walwyn and poet and polemicist John Milton. They provided a philosophical justification for toleration inspired by religious values that reflected, "a complex mix of scriptural, theological, ecclesiological, epistemological, ethical, political, and pragmatic arguments" (Zagorin 2005:13).

Several works of historical scholarship view toleration through the lens of a single author, and seek to understand the author's work on its own terms rather than through a pre-established narrative. Many of the thinkers celebrated by Zagorin are the subject of intensive scrutiny of this sort, especially Milton (Achinstein and Sauer 2007; Christopher 1982; Fulton 2004 Loewenstein 2001; Witte 2007) and Locke (Ashcraft 1986, Marshall 2006, Carey 2006, Forster 2005), but also Goodwin (Coffey 2006), and Bayle (Laursen 1998). These studies provide a robust picture of the range and diversity of ideas about religious toleration during the seventeenth century and demonstrate its importance as a political, intellectual and theological issue. However, Gordon Schochet (1996) points out that these progenitors of the intellectual tradition through which liberty of conscience was constructed as a fundamental right had little influence on the *Act of Toleration*. He argues that a principled commitment to toleration was not a significant factor in the success of the *Act*, and the limited pluralism it achieved was a far cry from liberty of conscience.⁴⁹

Schochet presents compelling evidence that Anglican support for the *Act* was motivated by their interest in preserving their political and ecclesiastical dominance. Rather than an end to religious exclusion, the *Act* represented a closing of the ranks of membership within the Church of England. Anglican hegemony was fully established; dissenters were incorporated but remained unequal. Other scholars concur that the *Act* was motivated by expedience rather than principle, although many emphasize security and civil peace rather than Anglican hegemony (Tyacke 1991, Hoak and Feingold 1996).

⁴⁹ In "Toleration and Comprehension." *The World of William and Mary* (1996), Schochet asserts that the genuine religious liberty was rarely discussed prior to publication of John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* in 1689. Liberty of conscience was a common term but in his reading it did not refer to a full liberty with no restrictions but was the same as toleration. Andrew Murphy concurs with this position in *Conscience and Community* (2003).

Persecution ceased because political elites recognized the high cost and low effectiveness of imposing religious uniformity, rather than because they were committed to liberty of conscience as a principle of public life. The terms of toleration perpetuated an exclusionary narrative of membership and constituted at best, a 'putting up with' deviance from a defined standard of religious practice. Furthermore, the *Act of Toleration* did little to relieve the civil disabilities Nonconformists suffered (Schochet 1992). A few scholars have argued that William III had a far more comprehensive vision of toleration, but the intended scope of the act was constrained by divisive politics (Schochet 1996, Tyacke 1991).

The apparent consensus among recent historians that the *Act of Toleration* was a gesture of political expedience, rather than a commitment to principle or mass revelation that religious persecution was unacceptable on the basis of abstract right, significantly undermines claims to Christian exceptionalism. Religious doctrine did not promote the resolution of the problems it wrought. Nor were the problems resolved through the decline of religion as a force in public life. The *Act of Toleration* occurred in a context where intense religiosity remained an ascendant characteristic of much of English society. As Peter Pett declared, while (anonymously) advocating liberty of conscience after the Restoration of Charles II:

And truly any man that considers the addictednesse of the English Nation to Religion in generall, will not wonder at mens being stimulated thereby to do what in civill things they think they lawfully may... Nor can they in worship of God do anything without excesse... Nor is the strong and passionate inclination of this Kingdom to Religion, a humour bred lately among us since the introduction of Protestancy (1661:26-7).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *A discourse concerning liberty of conscience In which are contain'd proposalls, about what liberty in this kind is now politically expedient to be given, and severall reasons to shew how much the peace and welfare of the nation is concern'd therein.* By R.T.,

Clearly, toleration was not a consequence of religious decline or indifference.

The *Act of Toleration* and the *Declaration of Rights* that greeted William III as he assumed the throne represent the culmination of nearly a century of debate about the nature of the political community and the proper relationship of religious and civil power. Regardless of broad recognition of the rights claims that some presented as the reason for toleration, the act itself was only possible as a consequence of a reconceptualization of the role of government and the ascendance of a particular vision of how its purpose was best achieved. For more than a century Nonconformity had been constructed in public discourse as a grave danger to the English nation. Yet by 1688 the threat of a Catholic monarch empowered to dictate religious practice far outweighed the fear of religious dissenters. The act itself achieved little in terms of religious toleration, but it reflected a substantial reconsideration of the role of the state both institutionally, and in the popular imaginary.

Arguably, all dramatic assertions of political inclusiveness entail some degree of expediency, and the sincerity of commitment to principle among political actors is ultimately less consequential than the practical instantiation of those principles. As Dahl contends in *Polyarchy*, political inclusiveness is a consequence of a change in the cost benefit calculus of repression (1972: 15). Among the factors that contributed to the cessation of persecution for religious dissenters at the end of the 17th century was a change in the public understanding of the purpose of government. Care of the soul was no longer regarded as part of the magisterial mandate, and the threat of spiritually

London : printed for Nathaniel Brook, in Cornhill, 1661. Pett, who wrote under the pseudonym "R.T." was a parliament supporter during the war and a Member of Parliament in 1660.

empowered consciences to political order loomed less large in the popular imaginary than that of a Catholic monarch.

"Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."

Foucault, History of Sexuality

In his work on the French Revolution, William Sewell argues that neither structural nor individualist explanations can account for the range of discourse within which individual decisions are made.⁵¹ The specific example he uses to illustrate his point is the storming of the Bastille in July 1789, from which arose the modern conception of revolution (2005:262). Why this event is articulated (and interpreted) as a gesture of popular sovereignty rather than as a matter of mob violence requires knowledge of the semiotic structures available to both interpreters and cultural entrepreneurs who sought to transform the discourse of power.

Expedience, as an explanation for the *Act of Toleration* (1689) and the marginal acceptance of religious pluralism it entailed, requires a similar contextualization. It is not sufficient to posit expedience against principle and assert that the former drove the process. Expedience is a consequence of perception and a particular ordering of principles. A prudential concern with political stability offers only part of an explanation of the *Act of Toleration*. A more robust understanding of how the Act came about

⁵¹ In "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille," chapter 8 of *Logics of History* (2005) Sewell argues that methodological individualism can provide a "plausible micro-translation of macro-historical explanations" of political change. However, this approach presumes a degree of stability of the goals of the actors that render it incapable accounting for the way that the incentive structure of a particular situation changes through historical events. The structures of economic distribution and meaning within which choices are made are important components of strategic calculation. But Sewell argues that even the combination of structural (within which he includes semiotic) factors within individual agency cannot adequately explain social change. This requires the addition of "the socially generated emotional experiences that inspire the invention and elaboration of new cultural meanings" (p. 268-9).

requires an explanation of why parliamentarians considered religious toleration a viable means of preserving political stability when political stability had long been one of the primary justifications for religious intolerance. The question we must consider is why it became politically expedient to relax the condition considered vital to the English constitution for much of the seventeenth century. In order to answer it we must look at the changes in cultural understanding that enabled this shift in perception.

The discussion will proceed in two parts. The first will consider the discourses of resistance to monarchical authority that developed in the sixteenth century as a consequence of de-differentiation of church and state and the devolution of religious authority. The Henrician Reformation put religious interpretation in the hands of the masses by translating the bible into English and breaking down class control of the clergy. In the context of abortive religious reforms, the Bible, along with the theological priority of the relationship between the individual and God were resources for exiled religious leaders to justify resistance to political authority. The mid-sixteenth century experience of English Protestant leaders led them to develop a concept of godly citizenship and obligation to resist the misuse of political authority. Divine authorization of political power mandated, not passive obedience as scholastic doctrine suggested, but stewardship of the godly over the exercise of that power. God's intentions were accessible to believers through scripture and prayer, and were a legitimate standard against which civil authority could be judged. These early English Protestants challenged scholastic political thought and medieval frameworks of the relationship between church and state. Particularly, they challenged the notion of the state as responsible for the soul, and the vision of the state as a necessary enforcer of church mandates that predominated

among Roman Catholics and Protestants alike.

However, these discourses would not become a significant factor in liberal political development until Elizabeth I successfully established a Protestant national identity. They helped to form the identity of a religious community in exile, the majority of whom happily returned to serve as protestant ministers under Elizabeth. The question at the time was not limiting the power of the state generally, but taking back God's mandate where it was improperly manifest in practice.

The expansion of political power through the Elizabethan church established critical links between the monarchy and the daily lives of ordinary people. Because so many aspects of life were regulated through the state-church, religious practice became the locus of confrontation between individual and community self-assertion and the nationalizing agenda of the monarchy. Elizabeth's use of the church to expand state capacity and standardize culture encroached upon the existing diversity of religious practice, prompting people to formulate their religious commitments in political terms. Communities and individuals with their own interpretations of Protestantism drew upon the narratives of exile and oppression employed by early protestant leaders to justify resistance. Elizabeth's use of the church to consolidate monarchical power and institute cultural uniformity provided the conditions through which these narratives contributed to the development of liberal principles.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal directly with the debates about religious toleration in the seventeenth century and their impact on liberal political thought. These debates occurred within the context of a hegemonic Anglican narrative, that for much of the seventeenth century took as axiomatic the necessity of religious homogeneity and hierarchical church

government to monarchy. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, a Calvinist consensus prevailed among ecclesiastics and church scholars that regarded the English state as an historically unique manifestation of God's will on earth. Monarchical power was divinely ordained, and the specifics of religious practice fell under its discretion. The state, rather than the singular Roman church, was the agent of God's will on earth and the representative of collective well-being.

The toleration debates are a consequence of conflict between this foundation of political unity in religious homogeneity and the diversity of practice within Protestant Christianity at the popular level. Political arguments made first by the Marian exiles and nonconformist Protestants resisting persecution in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were revived and expanded as the question of religious toleration resurfaced when the regime changed hands. The religious language that justified civil authority through much of the seventeenth century provided an opportunity for believers to challenge political power on its own terms. Early proponents of liberty of conscience drew upon scripture as a vision of a just society. Rational arguments premised upon the 'truths' of the Hebrew Bible and the experiences of the first Christians challenged the logic of a state church as well as the distribution and exercise of power within English society. On the eve of the civil wars, popular access to print created the conditions for robust public debate about the implications of Protestant theology for truth, social stability and governance.

While there was not a linear trajectory of acceptance of toleration as some earlier versions of 17th century history claim, the debates do evidence the emergence of notions of popular sovereignty, a distinction between public and private, and engaged citizenship

as a godly duty. Freedom of conscience is linked to a more fundamental notion of liberty, and the issue of toleration becomes a matter of general concern. By the 1670s the issue of state power, particularly the unrestrained capacity of the monarch, was linked to the question of religious persecution in terms of political right. Repression suffered by nonconformists, such as imprisonment and dispossession, were newly cast as violations of the traditional rights of Englishmen. Whigs in particular argued that political power to persecute affected all, not just religious dissenters. Unrestrained monarchical power, rather than the subversive potential of nonconformity, was the greatest threat to the English nation. In political debate, religion was transformed from a matter of common practices and beliefs essential to political cohesiveness, to a unique proclivity of Englishmen that must be safeguarded from tyranny. While people may inevitably disagree on specific matters of belief they shared an uncompromising intensity of religious passion. Religious repression would only engender strife; freedom of conscience on the other hand might “joyn all sorts of persons to the Magistrate because each shared in the benefit” (1647).⁵²

My analysis proceeds by considering the most active periods of discussion in chronological order. Presenting the debates in this manner facilitates consideration of the arguments with respect to their historical context. It further illuminates the evolution of the concepts on which the debate turned, and the self-referential character of the arguments put forth by the various sides. Particular pamphlets and treatises are revived

⁵² *Questions Propounded to the Assembly, to answer by the Scriptures: whether corporall punishments may be inflicted upon such as hold different opinions in Religion.* By Samuel Robinson. Printed London May 20, 1647. Accessed through Early English Books Online.

and republished by subsequent generations, which indicates the continuity of a culture of resistance among nonconformists from the sixteenth century. It also demonstrates the importance of historicizing as a rhetorical strategy. Advocates and opponents of toleration alike built their case upon a deeply rooted English identity and a set of entitlements or obligations that proceeded from its historical longevity.

The toleration debates dispel a number of commonly held assumptions about the development of liberal political thought with respect to religion. They illustrate the persistence of religion as the dominant frame of political membership and right in England through the end of the seventeenth century. Religion did not cease to be relevant to governance and social organization; there was no gradual process of secularization. Religion's salience to social life escalated as the monarchy, local offices, ministers and common people drew upon religious narratives and organizational resources to respond to an array of social problems.

Neither can liberal political concepts be attributed to the uniqueness of protestant doctrine as popular wisdom maintains. Christian narratives were employed to challenge monarchical power and establish the obligation of common people to ensure the just exercise of political authority. However, such narratives were not unique to Protestant Christianity, nor did they necessarily contribute to liberal ideas about governance. They became the basis for political competition and the language through which people resisted state power because the monarchy employed Protestant theology and the institution of the church to expand state capacity and promote cultural uniformity. Religion promoted political transformation in early modern England because it was the locus of individual experience of state power. The monarchy's use of Protestantism as a

nationalizing discourse created cultural opportunities for ordinary people to resist the encroachment of the state and conceptualize their role as citizens rather than subjects.

Chapter Three: Forming a Protestant Nation (1531-1603)

The de-differentiation of religion and state and subsequent use of the church to project power into the localities and foster a uniform political culture in sixteenth century England were critical factors in the revolutionary challenges to monarchical power in the seventeenth century. Religion became the locus of conflict between the king and the people because it was the primary means through which people experienced state power. It provided the conditions of collective resistance by creating a common experience across class and regional divisions and a shared language and tradition of political resistance. Analysis of arguments about the relationship between church and state from this period challenge contemporary assertions that the Protestant “priesthood of all believers” led to democratic political ideas. The experience of conflict between religious and political obligation among early Protestants generated theories of political resistance but they did little to change the scholastic conception of the state as God’s surrogate on earth.

Political Context: Dedifferentiation and Discontinuity

Henry VIII’s split from the Roman Church was based on his desire to secure the succession of power he had consolidated in developing the English throne into an absolute monarchy. His was the first peaceful succession to the throne since Henry V. He came to power after a radical decline in the population due to the plague, and inherited a realm in which the feudal ties between the king and his vassals were significantly weakened. During his reign the population of England doubled, inflation increased dramatically and social relationships and networks of power underwent significant changes. As feudal manors could no longer support large populations of serfs people moved into towns, worked for wages in the emerging textile industry and established guilds. Henry consolidated his own power by engaging in cultural strategies to build legitimacy for his rule.⁵³ He retained a court historian who linked Henry to King Arthur

⁵³ In *Discourse of Legitimacy in Early Modern England* Robert Zaller asserts that Henry VII was “the first English king to fully grasp the importance of representation and spectacle.” He was the first to appoint a court painter, he commissioned the first Tudor history in a series of panels depicting significant moments in his reign. He also employed

in support of his role as the true king of England, and made use of visual media and public pageantry to present himself in the image of the Hebrew kings David and Solomon. He commissioned his own image to grace the title page of the Great Bible, and appeared in court dramatically clad in white to invoke theological purity (Walsham 2007:44).

At the beginning of the sixteenth century and throughout Henry VIII's reign, Roman Catholicism was still the dominant religion in England. While there was often a significant gap between local practices and official church doctrine most people considered themselves part of the Roman confessional tradition and that England belonged to the "universal church of western Christendom" (Cressey and Ferrell 1996:2). Henry VIII's separation from the Roman Church and appointment of himself Supreme Head of the Church of England through the *Act of Supremacy* (1531) had significant consequences for the international position of England and initiated changes in the exercise of political power that put religion at the center of questions of political membership and authority. However, at the end of his reign only subtle changes were evident at the parish level.

Prior to his break with Rome, Henry VIII had been engaged in dialogue with Erasmus and endorsed the latter's endeavor to promote reform from within the church. The king shared Erasmus's anti-monastic views but had no objection to the ceremony or ecclesiastical structure of the church, nor did he support comprehensive reforms. He asserted his authority over the spiritual and financial matters of the church by assuming

three troupes of players and two minstrel companies to perform in the Chapel Royal and built the first pageant cars. He initiated a practice of signaling monarchical power through luxury, building chapels with stained glass, adorning castles with luxurious tapestries and embellishing royal documents with illuminated text. (2007:15)

the power to dissolve monasteries that were not, in his view, properly cultivating religious life. With the assistance of Cromwell he implemented some early reforms intended to rationalize religious practice, such as purging saints days, abolishing religious images and reducing the number of religious sacraments. However, Henry turned against the reform movement in 1538, and the *Six Articles* issued the following year restored many of the old practices. At the end of his reign, with the exception of the bible in English, the structure of religious practice at the parish level was largely left intact.⁵⁴ Services were still performed in Latin, and both the high ceremony elements of the Roman church and local rituals that stemmed from pagan practices persisted. The most comprehensive changes were the closure of the monasteries and subordination of the clergy to the crown through the *Act of Restraint and Appeals*, which foreclosed the right of clergy to appeal to 'foreign tribunals'.

The Regency Council that governed on behalf of Edward VI (1537-1553), Henry VIII's long sought son, who remained a minor throughout his reign, implemented more significant changes at the popular level. Archbishop Cranmer, who began the reform effort under Henry VIII, resumed establishing a distinctly Protestant English church under Edward. He abolished clerical celibacy and issued a Protestant prayer book that replaced the mass with a slightly modified service in English rather than Latin. Through the *Chantries Act* (1547) he absorbed the property of the parish churches and brought parish priests into the pension system established by Henry VIII for erstwhile monastics. The prayer book established parameters for priestly behavior that adapted much of the

⁵⁴ Cressey and Ferrell, for example, present evidence that life continued as usual for many parish churches through churchwarden's accounts which chronicle daily activity. See *Religion and Society in Early Modern England, A Sourcebook* (2005:35).

Roman fashion, but banned practices deemed “popish” or “superstitious” such as sacramental anointment, exorcism and presentation of the host for adoration.⁵⁵ While the church was still largely under the direction of the bishops and the clergy, these new practices carried the force of law and the church was ultimately subordinated to secular authority. In 1552 Cranmer issued yet another prayer book⁵⁶ that purged much of the mysticism from the service: parishioners were warned, for example, not to mistake the sacramental bread and wine for the actual body and blood of Christ.⁵⁷ The new demystified form of worship also required replacement of the altar with a communion table and elimination of church features that implied sanctification such as the division between the nave and the chancel.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Cranmer was aided in his effort to produce a new prayer book by German reformer, Martin Bucer.

⁵⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies in the Church of England* was authorized by an act of Parliament, *An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments*. 1552. STC (2nd ed.) / 16284.5

⁵⁷ The 1552 prayer book directs people to receive the sacrament of communion while kneeling but advises them that this gesture of humility should not be mistaken as one of belief in transubstantiation (the turning of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ): “Leste yet the same kneelyng myght be thought or taken otherwyse we dooe declare that it is not ment thereby, that any adoracion is doone, or oughte to bee doone, eyther unto the Sacramentall bread or wyne there bodily receyved, or unto anye reall and essencial presence there beeyng of Christ's naturall fleshe and bloude. For as concernynge the Sacramentall bread and wyne, they remayne styll in theyr verye naturall substaunces, and therefore may not be adored, for that were Idolatrye to be abhorred of all faythfull christians. And as concernynge the naturall body and blood of our saviour Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is agaynst the trueth of Christes true natural bodye, to be in moe places then in one, at one tyme.” The omission of this directive from Elizabeth’s 1559 prayer book became a point of grievance among Puritans. At the demand of the Presbyterians it was put in the 1661 revised prayer book of Charles II. It remains a part of the English prayer-book.

⁵⁸ Cranmer’s theology appears to be indebted to that of Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli, whose views on the Eucharist were the basis of conflict with Luther. Zwingli rejected the notion of transubstantiation, seeing the Eucharist as merely a symbol rather than the actual appearance of Christ. His views of church and state as one under God, represented

Edward VI's death in 1553 brought an end to Cranmer's reforms. Henry VIII's Roman Catholic daughter, Queen Mary, re-established Catholic worship upon succeeding Edward to the throne. She banished the Protestant prayer book and restored the Latin mass and Roman sacramental practice. Cranmer's incipient reforms were reversed, largely to the pleasure of local congregations (Collison 1988, Duffy 1992, Haigh 1987, 1993, Scarisbrick 1984). Many people welcomed the return of altars and images to the church and resumption of elaborate services and processions.⁵⁹ Those who had converted to the new religion were obliged to resume the old practices or seek refuge in Switzerland, the Netherlands or Belgium.⁶⁰ Some, including Cranmer, publicly resisted the resumption of Roman hegemony and were imprisoned or burned at the stake. Under Mary dutiful adherents to Edward's national church, as well as separatists of various stripes who had been perceived as seditious under Henry and Edward, were cast as heretics and forced to recant or suffer execution. In less than four years 282 men and women were burned alive, most of them from the working classes.⁶¹

by the scripture and the sword respectively are also evident in early efforts to establish a specifically English Protestantism.

⁵⁹ In *Religious Radicals in Tudor England*, Joseph Walford Martin notes that the color and drama of full-dress processions banished by the Edwardian church were particularly appealing to the general population in the sixteenth century. Diaries from Elizabeth's reign indicate that her regime substituted military and other state processions for ecclesiastical ceremonies. *Religious Radicals in Tudor England*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989. P. 110.

⁶⁰ Dickens has data on the number of refugees; John Foxe cites 800, according to Dickens there are 788 exiles confirmed by contemporary scholarship but many more ordinary people are likely to have fled persecution.

⁶¹ A.G. Dickens. *The English Reformation (2nd Edition)*. State College, PA: Penn State Press, 1991: 331. Dickens' draws on the reporting of John Foxe. The preponderance of female martyrs were working-class housewives, widows and servants who embraced biblical Christianity and a 'true church'. Dickens argues that the Reformation was a major episode in the spiritual history of women. Emboldened by beliefs and equipped

Mary's church approached the problem of Protestantism as the medieval church had handled the Lollards, a heretical movement begun in the 14th century by Oxford theologian, John Wycliffe. It presented people with the choice of recanting their heresy or being burned alive so that their souls might be saved from eternal damnation. The logic of religious persecution was the same as it had been under Henry VIII and Edward VI, despite vacillation in the criteria for assessing heresy. Physical punishment and banishment were acceptable means of compelling non-believers toward the true faith because the state had a duty to care for the soul by giving material force to spiritual sanctions.

This doctrine had deep roots in the tradition of the Roman church. It was justified through the letters of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, directing church authorities how to deal with the Donatist heretics. Augustine's definition of a heretic, however, turned not on the nature of a person's beliefs but the passion with which s/he expressed and defended them. He rejected death as a punishment for heresy because it obviated the goal of physical suffering, which was to spur the person toward correct beliefs. Aquinas carried Augustine's doctrine of persecution further to characterize heresy as any rejection of papal authority and to justify death as a punishment for false beliefs. Civil authority was charged with care of the soul and preservation of the spiritual community. Because of its responsibility for individual souls the state was justified in inducing conversion through physical suffering as long as the sinner had the opportunity to recant. The duty to preserve the Christian community however, justified more drastic measures where the heretic was obdurate in his or her rejection of the 'truth'. Aquinas quotes St. Jerome

with newfound literacy, women rejected conventional female roles and became religious activists.

regarding the proper treatment of unrepentant heretics: “Cut off the decayed flesh, expel the mangy sheep from the fold, lest the whole house, the whole paste, the whole body, the whole flock, burn, perish, rot, die. Arius was but one spark in Alexandria, but as that spark was not at once put out, the whole earth was laid waste by its flame.”⁶² Aquinas dispenses with Augustine’s notion that doctrinal challenges have a salutary effect on belief by, “make[ing] us shake off our sluggishness, and search the Scriptures more carefully” (De Gen. cont Manich. i, 1). Heretics should be considered on the basis of their intention, Aquinas argues, rather than in terms of their inadvertent effect. They intend corruption of the faith, a considerable harm that cannot be tolerated.

Aquinas thus effectively shifts Augustine’s emphasis on the autonomy of the will from an essential condition of individual belief to one that can only correctly be exercised in conformity with papal doctrine. Where Augustine the believer recognized the unique spiritual experience of voluntary movement toward God,⁶³ Augustine the institution builder saw the importance of establishing an authoritative doctrine that bound and defined the community of believers. The latter was a source of strength against external threat and internal dilution of meaning, but could not fully eclipse the former. Thus, Augustine emphasized the relative openness to persuasion of one whose beliefs were

⁶² *Summa Theologiae*. Vol. II-II, Q. 11, Art. 3.

⁶³ See *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. In this early work Augustine affirms individual experience as the vehicle for truth and the inevitable plurality of those experiences. Truth would also settle the divisions that individual interpretations wrought: “In this diversity of true opinions, let Truth herself bring forth concord” (Book XII, Ch. 30) and “So when someone says, “Moses meant what I think,” and someone else says, “No, he meant what I think,” would it not be more reverent to say: “Why not as you both think, if what each of you thinks is true?” And if in these words someone should see a third or a fourth truth, or indeed any other truth at all, why should we not believe that all these truths were seen by Moses through whom the one God tempered the Holy Scriptures to the minds of many, so that their minds should see different things, though all true things.” (Book XII, Ch. 31).

alleged false as the defining aspect of heresy, rather than the beliefs themselves. The tension in Augustine's writing between the religious community's political need to maintain boundaries through authoritative assertion of doctrine, and the idea of truth as emergent in the spiritual experience of the individual, is resolved to church authority in Aquinas. In Aquinas, truth is fully revealed by God's church. Individual freedom is nothing more than acceptance of that truth through right reason.⁶⁴ Unlike Augustine, Aquinas does not regard voluntarism as an essential condition of faith. Consequently, he sees heresy as inherently destructive to the religious community. Freedom of the will for Aquinas does not necessitate free expression of ideas, as aspects of Augustine's position might imply. The nuances of each of these positions would inform the debate about the relationship between church and state for the rest of the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth century.

During the sixteenth century Aquinas's perspective on the role of civil authority in enforcing correct beliefs predominated, despite disagreements about which beliefs should be enforced. The Marian burnings and Henrician opposition to both Lollardy and Lutheranism⁶⁵ were justified with the same argument. As Thomas More put it, the

⁶⁴ See Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* the state is "*communitas perfecta*" endowed with all that is sufficient for the life of all men. He understands the State in terms of Aristotle's idea that people can only fulfill their potentialities through collective life. The state represents a fixed ideal of common good toward which individuals are brought into harmony with one another and their capacity for virtue is developed. Progress exists with respect to individual understanding and conformity to an ideal rather than in terms of the existing social order. For Augustine, the state is at best a solution to the problem of order created by human nature. But for Augustine, at least in the *Confessions*, time has its own causality. The human struggle in the world to know God shapes both the world and human understanding of it. Thus progress is possible, even if the ideal of the heavenly city on earth will always remain remote. See also Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (1990).

⁶⁵ The first Protestant martyrs recorded by Foxe in *Acts and Monuments* suffered under Henry VIII. Anne Askew, for example, the daughter of a Lincolnshire knight was

‘carbuncle’ of heresy had to be chopped out lest it infect the entire political community.⁶⁶ A sermon by Edmund Bonner (1557) declared, “those that be evil, of love, we ought to procure until them theyr correction” by imitating a “good surgeon [who] cutteth away a putrefyed and festrd member for the love he hath to the whole body.”⁶⁷ Protestant leaders embraced religious persecution as eagerly as the Catholics they condemned as corrupt and tyrannical. Calvin advocated the punishment of heretics because, “They infect souls with the poison of depraved dogma.”⁶⁸ Hugh Latimer, a passionate preacher and early Protestant reformer, argued that civil authorities should extinguish heresy lest ‘false doctrine’ consume everything in its midst. His own views were heavily influenced by Luther and in the early years of the Henrician reformation he supported Henry’s assumption of control of the church in anticipation of more comprehensive reforms.⁶⁹

The doctrine was not without its challengers, even in the early stages of the Henrician reformation. A 1538 letter from Archbishop Cranmer, for example, objected to the indictment of 5 men in Kent for holding ‘unlawful assemblies’. Cranmer argued that the indictment should be overturned on the grounds that the men were cited for no other reason than being “fauters [supporters] of the new doctrine, as they call it”.⁷⁰ Cranmer

tortured and executed for refusing to disavow her protestant views on the mass. Excerpted in Cressey and Ferrell (1996) pp. 33-34. This doctrine justified the persecution of Lollardy in England since the movement began in the 14th century.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Grell and Porter (2000) p. 1.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Walsham, (2006) p. 42.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Marshall (2006) p. 323. The quote is conveyed through Castellio’s response to Calvin’s persecutory position. See Castellio, *Contra libellum Calvini in quo ostendere conatur haereticos jure gladii coercendos esse*, in Bainton (ed.) (1935) pp.265-87. (“Reply to Calvin’s Book in which he Endeavours to Show that Heretics Should Be Coerced by the Right of the Sword”)

⁶⁹ Latimer resigned his bishopric under Henry VIII to protest conservative counter-reform, the *Six Articles* (1539).

⁷⁰ Quoted in Pearse, M.T., “Free Will, Dissent and Henry Hart,” (1989) p. 452.

expressed concern that persecuting people for embracing God's word would incite sedition. If persecution of this sort were allowed, on what grounds could the regime prevent harassment of Protestants by Catholic officials at the local level who objected to the king's reforms? (Pearse 1989:452). Among the men charged in this instance was Henry Hart, who became one of the most published religious dissidents during the mid-sixteenth century. A leader of a group called the 'Freewill Men' for their emphasis on virtuous action rather than ritual and authority, Hart denounced all religious pretension and claims to doctrinal authority in matters of faith:

Woo be to those bishops, pastours and lawiers, of what place and name soever they be, whiche boast of power and auctoritie to rule and governe other and yet have no respecte to their owne soules: For hemly and miserably shal thei be rewarded that bear the name of the chosen people whiche seke holynes onely by outward sacramentes and signes, not regardyng what the hert & inward conscience bee... (Hart 46).

He objected to coercive religion, and identified the intellectual and ecclesiastical monopoly over religious truth as the cause of religious error, "Wo be to those proude boastyng spirites, which...teache their flockes by poure and penaltie, and not rather by ensamples of vertue & godly lyuyng" (Hart 46).

Generally speaking, even religious dissidents wanted the power of the state behind 'correct' beliefs. Some were driven to impose their views on others by the passion of their experience of truth, and fear of the impact that mass revelation might have on social order. Luther was originally committed to the idea expressed in *On Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed* (1523), that compulsion of beliefs was both futile and improper given the deeply personal nature of belief and its inaccessibility to any but God:

Heresy can never be restrained by force. One will have to tackle the problem in

some other way, for heresy must be opposed and dealt with otherwise than with the sword. Here God's word must do the fighting. If it does not succeed, certainly the temporal power will not succeed either, even if it were to drench the world in blood. Heresy is a spiritual matter which you cannot hack to pieces with iron, consume with fire, or drown in water. God's word alone avails here, as Paul says in II Corinthians 10 {4-5}, "our weapons are not carnal, but mighty in God to destroy every argument and proud obstacle that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to take every thought captive in the service of Christ (1523:450).

Christians were generally bound to obey the law despite its irrelevance to those who were truly moved by the spirit. "If all the world were composed of real Christians," he proclaims, "there would be no need for benefits from prince, king, lord, sword or law. They would serve no purpose, since Christians have in their heart the Holy Spirit, who both teaches and makes them to do injustice to no one, to love everyone, and to suffer injustice and even death willingly and cheerfully at the hands of anyone." However, in the interest of maintaining order, Christians should support secular law lest they undermine its authority and weaken its power over those who need it, i.e. the lawless.

In Luther's vision true Christians already dwelled in the heavenly city, and were thus untouchable by the profane condition of nonbelievers. They could exist within any political order without obligation to resist nor possibility of corruption through fulfillment of worldly demands because they already lived in righteousness. But while necessary, civil power should not be mistaken for spiritual authority and claims by the former over the latter were nothing short of madness:

How can a mere man see, know, judge, condemn and change hearts? That is reserved for God alone, as Psalm 7 [9] says, "God tries the hearts and reins" and [v.8], "The Lord judges the peoples... the thoughts and inclinations of the soul can be known to no one but God. Therefore it is futile and impossible to command or compel anyone by force to believe this or that... Force will not accomplish it... If the spiritual rule of the church governs only public matters, how dare the mad temporal authority judge and control such a secret, spiritual, hidden matter as faith?" (Luther 446).

Citing Augustine, he declares that faith is a free act, the work of God in the spirit rather than something external authority can compel or create, “No one can or ought to be forced to believe” (Luther 446).

Within several years of these statements, however, the threat of popular radicalism loomed larger than that of ecclesiastical compulsion. Following the Peasants’ War in Germany Luther did his best to curb the radical potential of his own challenges to the Roman Church. Christian perfectionism should not be sought in the earthly city; the Christian ideal could not be turned on secular authority as a standard of justice or a political critique. Political stability was a necessary condition of the movement of righteousness in the world – and important to the growth of his own nascent church. Thus, in some cases political authority must act to suppress blasphemous and seditious claims on the basis of faith. Not unlike Augustine’s, Luther’s ideas about the separation of religious and political authority and the duty of Christians to resist encroachment upon their consciences varied with his own standpoint in relation to political power. The subversive aspects of his early ideas – those expressed when he stood in the minority against Roman hegemony – found voice among religious dissidents well into the seventeenth century. His argument on the basis of state did as well, however. It was echoed by Hugo Grotius as well as in numerous Presbyterian anti-toleration pamphlets.

When Elizabeth I took the throne England was still largely a Roman Catholic country in terms of both official doctrine and popular and clerical orientation. Henry VIII’s changes in religious practice were minimal after he curtailed the initial reform program executed by Cranmer and Latimer. Mary’s re-establishment of papal supremacy, elimination of Edward’s prayer book and restoration of the graven images and ceremony

that Cranmer struck from the churches largely restored religion in England to what it had been before Henry's break with Rome. However, two changes wrought by Henry VIII had far reaching consequences for the balance of religious and political authority. The first was the dissolution of monasteries and appropriation of church land and revenue. Subordination of the ministry to the crown and the consequent decline in church resources made the clergy a far less attractive career option to second sons of noble and gentry families. Unlike their medieval predecessors, the Tudor clergy were increasingly drawn from the working classes (Leslie Jones 2002). The ministry, which had long been a bastion of upper class interest, became a new avenue of collective influence for common people.⁷¹ The second was the translation of the Bible into English, a matter Henry VIII originally resisted but ultimately allowed in 1537. Both factors contributed to a reinterpretation of the Christian faith toward the interests of common people and a critique of opulence and class hierarchy. The vernacular Bible in particular availed common people of a discourse through which they could contest political power on its own terms.⁷²

Democratizing knowledge: The vernacular Bible and religious identity

Rede me and be nott wrothe,⁷³ For I say nothing but the trothe. (1528)⁷⁴

⁷¹ One example of this is Robert Crowley (1518?-1588), author of *Information and Petition Against the Oppressors of the Poor Commons of this realm*, addressed to Parliament in 1547, that characterized the oppression of the landless classes as "more than Turkish tyranny" as well as many other social critiques and challenges to religious conformity.

⁷² Daniell (2003) estimates that about 2 million bibles were printed in England between 1526 and 1640 for a population of six million. p. 121.

⁷³ Angry, wrathful.

⁷⁴ Satirical verse directed at Cardinal Wosley variously attributed to William Barlow, Jerome Barlow and William Roy. The poem is a conversation between the servants of a priest about the burning of Tyndale's New Testament.

In 1525 William Tyndale produced the first English translation of the New Testament, based largely on Erasmus's 1516 Greek-Latin version. Erasmus's version was the first non-Latin translation of the scripture in over a millennium, and it encouraged scholars to return to the Greek and Hebrew texts to ensure accurate interpretation of the Bible. Erasmus's intent was both to liberate the scripture from the corrupt and self-referential lineage of authoritative renderings of religious truth and to make the text available to a wide audience. His preface to the 1516 edition declared:

I totally dissent from those who are unwilling that the sacred Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, should be read by the unlearned, as if Christ had taught such subtle doctrines that they can with difficulty be understood by a very few theologians, or if the strength of the Christian religion lay in man's ignorance of it. The mysteries of Kings it were perhaps better to conceal, but Christ wishes his mysteries to be published as widely as possible.⁷⁵

Henry VIII did not share Erasmus's view that common people (even women, farmers and weavers as Erasmus goes on to specify) would benefit from direct exposure to the Bible. Rather, he saw it as a source of heresy and argument and persisted in banning the translation of the bible into English.⁷⁶ As Tyndale sought to remedy England's lack of a vernacular Bible he soon concluded "there was no place to do it in all England" (Daniell 2001: 94).

Tyndale's translation was published in Holland instead, in 1526, and smuggled

⁷⁵ Quoted in G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England* (1983) p. 116.

⁷⁶ Daniell posits fear of Lutheranism in England as the reason for the strong line against the vernacular bible. Lutheran books had been publicly burned in Cambridge and London between the publication of Luther's German New Testament in 1522 and Tyndale's attempt to win support for an English bible. Lutherans, like Lollards, were sought out for persecution. (2001: 94). Suppression of the Lollards for their English translation of the Bible is another reason printers may have shied away from producing English translations of the Bible and for the lack of an English bible despite its translation into Dutch, German. See also Daniell, David. *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. Youngblood, et. alia. *The Challenge of Bible Translation*. 2003:181.

back into England. Within a few years several English translations of the bible were circulating in England. In addition to Tyndale's 1526 New Testament, he published the Pentateuch (the Torah) in 1530 and a revised New Testament in 1534. His friend Miles Coverdale published the first complete English Bible in 1535 and John Rogers published "Matthew's Bible" in 1537, which drew substantially on the other two. Tyndale's Bible was particularly objectionable to Henry VIII, who denounced it for error and its use of common language. In the "Preface" to the English edition of a letter denouncing Luther (1526) that earned him the title 'Defender of the Faith' Henry included association with Tyndale among Luther's failings, and declared his intention to ban Tyndale's Bible and punish its readers. He suggested that an English Bible was not in itself objectionable; if good men were patient at some point there might be a New Testament "truly and faithfully translated, substantially viewed and corrected, by sufficient authority to be put in your hands".⁷⁷ The king was not forthcoming with such a translation, however, despite arguments from the bishops that people saw it as the king's duty to provide a bible in English. Instead Henry issued a proclamation damning heresies and "prohibiting the having of holy scripture translated into the vulgar tongues of English, French or Duche [German]."⁷⁸

Henry VIII relented to popular and ecclesiastical pressure to provide a translation of the Bible just a few months after Tyndale was burned at the stake for treason and heresy at Henry's behest. Recognizing that an English bible would be an asset to the newly independent Church of England he commissioned Miles Coverdale, whose 1535 translation of the Bible contained a laudatory dedication to Henry VIII, to author the

⁷⁷ Quoted in Daniell, *The Bible in English*. 2003:164.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 165.

“Great Bible” of 1539. The frontispiece of this officially sanctioned book bore an image of the king bestowing bibles upon a crowd with the assistance of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, the architect of his separation from Rome.

Henry VIII ordered the *Great Bible* to be placed in all English churches, but his fear of its disruptive power persisted and he took legal measures to contain its effects. A 1543 statute restricted access to the book, specifically proscribing from its readership, “women, artificers, apprentices, journeymen, servingmen under the degree of yeomen, husbandmen and labourers” (Dickens 1991:213). Neither order had significant effect however, as the monarchy lacked the capacity to enforce either distribution of bibles or access to them. During Edward’s reign only 55 of 96 churches in London had any sort of bible (Martin 1989:72).

There is some textual evidence that access to the English bible promoted not only the sort of ale house disputes and challenges to clerical authority among the lower ranks of society that Henry VIII feared, but serious critique of political power. For Henry Hart, who wrote over a hundred pages on what the ‘true religion’ requires of people, the bible’s “release from its long imprisonment under the clerics of the medieval church” was an opening of a new era in history:

God in tymes past... spake to the fathers by prophetes, but in these last daies he hath spoke to us, as S. Paule sayeth, by his Sonne... and by him hath he now declared his most godley will unto us, that we might obtain life in him: whose most excellent clear brightness hath long time been darkened, and as S. John saieth, hid as with a sackecloth made with heyre, yt is to say with a fayned ryghtuousenes ground upō naturall wysdome and carnall reason, invented and set fourth by man: So that the bright shynyng beames of goddes truth cōteyned in the holy Scriptures might in no wise appere (by reason of that dark vaile or cloud) to the eyes or mynd

of men, whiche is not yet wyth all men taken awaye.⁷⁹

Hart uses the metaphor of captivity throughout his *Consultorie*, declaring that the Christian nation had been oppressed far longer than the Hebrew people. The Bible was all they needed as a guide to liberty, which was inherent in the spirit of God. Salvation required not ceremony and ritual, nor even membership within the Christian faith, but only virtuous action. He denounced the idea of election either among specific Christians or among Christian nations. The radical egalitarianism implied by his emphasis on action rather than predestination was a significant challenge to the social and political order. Not only did it suggest that class divisions were meaningless before God, it undermined the basis of Christian exceptionalism: Turks, Jews and heathens were equally born of God and capable of salvation through virtuous action.

The power of the Bible to promote conversion and inspire evangelism in those who encountered it for the first time is a theme both in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and in seventeenth century historiography of the Reformation. William Maldon describes being compelled "to speke of the Scriptures" and coming to see church processions and images as 'plain idolatry' through his own bible reading.⁸⁰ Maldon's near death at his

⁷⁹ Henry Hartt, *A Consultorie for all Christians Most Godly and Ernestly Warnyng Al People, to Beware Least They Beare the Name of Christians in Vayne*. Now first imprinted, the. xxx day of Ianuarie. Anno. M.D.xlix. At Worceter : By Iohn Oswen, (1549) p. 7. STC (2nd ed.) / 12564. Cambridge University Library.

⁸⁰ An account of Maldon's experience is printed in Nichols, John Gough and John Foxe. *Narrative of the Days of the Reformation: Chiefly from the Manuscripts of John Foxe the Martyrologist*. Printed for the Camden Society 1859, p. 348. The author claims the account comes from Foxe's papers. At the end of *Acts and Monuments* Foxe comments, "Mention was made, not long before, of one William Maldon.." but there is no prior reference to Maldon in the text. The editor of *Narrative* infers that Foxe intended to include Maldon's account and omitted it accidentally. He further comments from his 19th century vantage that Maldon's account of suffering appears trifling but does demonstrate the fervor of crowds at hearing the bible "first promulgated in the vulgar tongue".

father's hands for his 'heretical' views became part of protestant lore through its description by John Foxe, and more than a century later by historian John Strype (1643-1737).⁸¹ Foxe provides accounts of other protestant conversions through the bible, notably that of William Maundrel, who was illiterate but carried a New Testament with him for "when he came into any company that could read."⁸² Various tracts from the 1540s declare that the bible trumps existing religious authority by providing all a Christian needed to know. John Champneys, for example, characterized the traditional clergy as "spiritual thieves and murders": "they are thieves because they take from Christ that which is his, that is the ministracion of the woorde of God, which ought onely to be ministered by the power of the spirite of Christ" and murderers, "because they dooe as moche as in theim lyeth, spirituallye to murther all those soules to whome they have so preached" (image 27).⁸³

Protestations against the English bible and admonishments to ordinary people against presuming the capacity to interpret it also provide some insight into its disruption to political and social order. In 1546 Stephen Gardiner, the bishop of Winchester, beseeched his reader to consider:

how ful of inquite this tyme is, in whiche, the hyghe mysterie of our religion is so openly assaulted. Byleve not every spirit, and mystruste thyne owne judgement, above the reache of thy capacite. If thou beest hungry for knowledge, take hede though fallest not on every careyn Be desyrouse of the very truth, and seke it as

⁸¹ Strype, John. *Memorials of the Most Reverend Father in God, Thomas Cranmer sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury wherein the history of the Church, and the reformation of it, during the primacy of the said archbishop, are greatly illustrated: and many singular matters relating thereunto : now first published in three books : collected chiefly from records, registers, authentick letters, and other original manuscripts* (1694).

⁸² John Foxe. *Acts and Monuments* VIII, pp. 102-3. (1563) STC (2nd ed.) / 11222. Henry Huntington Library.

⁸³ Champneys, John. *The harvest is at hand, vvhether the tares shall be bound, and cast into the fyre and brent..* London (1548). STC (2nd ed.) / 4956. British Library.

thou art ordered, by the direction of Christes church, and not as deceytfull teachers, wold leade the, by theyr secrete waies. Folow God and his mynisters, whom he ordereth to rule, and rather conforme knowlege to agre with obedience, where goddes truthe repugneth not vnto it, then with violation of obedience, which is a displeasaunt fault to enterpryse the subuersion of goddes honoure and glory. (image 3).⁸⁴

The idea that people were equal in their capacity to understand God's truth was nothing but deceit and sophistry, an appeal by the devil to those who lacked the learning and wisdom to recognize their inferiority. John Standish in his 1554 tract, *A Discourse Wherein Is Debated Whether It Be Expedient That the Scripture Should Be in English for All Men to Read that Will*,⁸⁵ denounced the vernacular bible for its corrupting effects. He compares it to poisoned bread; the translators spiritually poisoned people by maliciously using words intended to persuade common people of the truth of heresies. In addition to killing souls, he charged lay bible reading with disrupting the church and other social institutions. It promoted argument about interpretation and undermined hierarchical relations. The only way to stop its detrimental effect on society was to eliminate it altogether.

Alexander Alesius (1500-1565), a reformer and defender of the right of people to read the bible in English, took the more pragmatic view that the cat could not be put back into the bag. His 1537 debate with John Stokesly, Bishop of London, on the nature of the sacraments was published in 1544 as *Of the auctorite of the word of god agaynst the bisshop of london wherein are conteyned certen disputacyons had in the parlament howse betwene the bisshops a bowt the number of the sacramen[n]ts and other things*,

⁸⁴ Gardiner, Stephen. *A detection of the Devils sophistrie wherwith he robbeth the vnlearned people, of the true byleef, in the most blessed sacrament of the aulter*. London 1546. STC (2nd ed.) / 11591. British Library.

⁸⁵ STC (2nd ed.) / 23207. Henry Huntington Library.

very necessary to be known, made by Alexa[n]der Alane Scot and sent to the duke of Saxon. (1544).⁸⁶ Quoting the Bishop of Herforth he affirms that clergy and intellectual elites could no longer “by any sophistical suttiles steale out of the world again the light which every man doth see.” Christ had lighted the world with the gospel and any resistance to it would be in vain, “The lay peple do now knowe the holy scripture better than many of us. And the germanes have made the text of the Bible so playne and easy by the hebrewe and the greke tong that now many things may be better understood without any gloses at all than by all the commentarys of the doctors” (Alesius 12). Alesius urges the bishops to deal with the controversies in a manner that preserves their authority – direct access to the bible gave people something against which to assess the bishops claims. By trying to maintain a monopoly over truth and perpetuate mystery they might “lose all your estimacyon and autoryte with them which before toke yow for lerned men and profitable members unto the common welth of Christendome.” “Truth” he warned, “is the daughter of tyme and tyme is the mother of truth. And what so ever is besieged of truth can not long continue” (Alesius 12).

The matter of conscience: justifying resistance

Access to the vernacular bible contributed to a discourse of political resistance in the face of religious persecution during the mid-sixteenth century that would inform the arguments for religious toleration and monarchical restraint over the ensuing century and a half. The political treatises of John Ponet, Christopher Goodman and John Knox, in particular, from the mid-sixteenth century rely on the bible as the definitive guide to

⁸⁶ STC (2nd ed.) / 292. British Library.

religious truth and as evidence of historical precedent, from which correct actions could be derived. Ponet's vision of the commonwealth and the rights and responsibilities of people facing tyrannical rulers drew from classical sources that were in vogue in Edward VI's court as well as the English common law tradition,⁸⁷ but his argument also relied on a notion of religious belief that required direct access to the scripture. Knox and Goodman construct their justifications for resistance almost exclusively from the scriptures. The treatises of all three were reprinted during the English Civil war, and directly influenced republican theorists of the mid seventeenth century.

John Ponet's *Short Treatise of Political Power* advocated resistance to blasphemous tyrants, even to the point of tyrannicide.⁸⁸ He begins with questions regarding the source and nature of political power: Who authorizes it? Where does it come from? What are the limits on its use? Political authority, he argued, comes from the law God declared to Noah to restore order and address the iniquity that prevailed after the great flood, "He that sheddeth the bloud of man, his bloud shell be shed by man, for man is made after the image of God" (Ponet 5). With this command God authorized political power and the creation of laws such as were necessary to create peace, so that people might "serve him quietly in holiness and righteousness all the daies of their life" (Ponet 5). Political authority extended over goods, lands, possessions and anything that might

⁸⁷ Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan in *A Sourcebook of Christian Political Thought From Irenaeus to Grotius*, cite among Ponet's influences the legal radicalism of John of Salisbury, Fortescue's conservative constitutionalism, the medieval scholastics (including Marsilius of Padua who was enjoying a revival in England), Plato, Aristotle and Cicero as well as Calvin via Peter Martyr Vermigli. (1999). p. 695.

⁸⁸ *A Shorte Treatise of Politike Pouuer and of the True Obedience Which Subiectes Owe to Kynges and Other Ciuile Gouvernours, With An Exhortacion To All True Naturall Englishe Men*, compyled by. D. I.P. B. R. VV. (Strasbourg : Printed by the heirs of W. Köpfel, 1556. STC (2nd ed.) / 20178. Henry Huntington Library.

breed controversy and discord. The fall of Adam left humans in a state of unreliable reason and excessive sensuality that required the discipline of a ruler. God granted this power to people collectively, however, rather than to a particular person, class or lineage. Human likeness to God renders people suitable to wield power over one another, and all people were made in God's image.

God's command to Noah provided guidance on how to govern by establishing the principles of equality and proportionality in the origins of law itself. Ponet interprets this original law as requiring the lawmaker to "set apart all affections and to observe an equality in pains, that they might not be greater or less than the fault deserveth, that they punish not the innocent or small offender for malice and let the mighty and great thief escape for affection" (Ponet 5). The nature and size of the lawmaking body is a matter of popular judgment, based on what the governed consider necessary to maintain justice and the collective well-being. God does not, Ponet implies, ordain kingship but merely authorizes the political power that the king wields. That power might be wielded by a tyrant, by a democracy or by a mixed state (as Ponet considers England to be), God's concern is not the form but the quality of governance. Laws that are too difficult to keep, impose too great a burden on the poor, rob the innocent of judgment or fail to protect the weak are unrighteous, and represent a failure of the ruler's responsibility. In such cases people must reassume sovereignty and place it in more reliable hands.

Ponet's conception of the relationship between the ruler and the governed had a significant impact on social contract theory. The divine nature and civil purpose of political authority constrain its exercise and impose particular duties on members of society. Divine sanctioning of political power logically requires that kings be subject to

the law, otherwise God would be the author of tyranny. Ponet's derivation of political power from the purpose of civil society also presumes equal subjugation to the law. The ruler suffers from the same failings that the state is designed to address and thus is no more reliable in operating without them. The intended end of the state requires that rulers obey human customs and statutes as well as divine and natural law. Against Machiavelli, Ponet argues that moral principles are divine commandments through which the peace and prosperity that is the ultimate purpose of government can be realized. The ruler does not exist in a one to one relationship with God, as the Tudor monarchs (and later Hobbes) presumed, but in a reciprocal relationship with the people of responsibility for preserving the commonwealth that was ultimately secured by God.

Ponet's derivation of political authority from its purpose in securing the peace necessary for people to worship God echoes Luther's early position with respect to the state. Perhaps because of his experience of religious persecution, unlike Luther, Ponet does not balk at the radical implications of his position in fear of popular unrest. Rather, he invests absolute political authority in individual conscience. Obedience, he argues, is the sinew of the commonwealth that provides it with structure and strength. Too much will lead to tyranny, as rulers forget their purpose. Too little will lead to licentiousness, as people forget their duty. Good governance comes about from a tension between the ruler and the general public, who are bound to ensure that power is exercised toward the general good. The judgment people use in fulfilling the obligations of citizenship that Ponet describes comes from understanding and applying God's will as revealed through the scripture. Conscience, "a great zeal by the inward motion of God's spirit" (Ponet 53), is not only beyond the purview of the state to control or coerce, it is the faculty through

which people manifest the will of God by shaping the exercise of political power.

Ponet's synthesis of classical republican theory and scripture – understood as both the will of God and as an historical source – provided the basis for political resistance to monarchical power through much of the seventeenth century. His notion of godly citizenship and restriction of the power of the state to civil matters is evident in the arguments against the state church in the pamphlets, treatises and petitions of religious nonconformists. *The Short Treatise on Political Power* was republished in 1639 and twice in 1642. The introduction to these editions urged the reader to note “a mighty zeal and a fervent care of the Author for his Countrey” and suggested that the current situation might warrant the drastic measures Ponet outlines.⁸⁹ Ponet's influence on the Levellers (particularly Katherine Chidley) is evident in their arguments for the separation of church and state and limiting the purview of the state in matters of conscience. John Milton quotes the work in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* to argue that Reformation thought justified tyrannicide, and several scholars, including John Adams, have remarked upon Ponet's influence on John Locke.⁹⁰

Two other prominent ecclesiastics during Edward VI's reign elaborated a doctrine of resistance to political authority that relied almost exclusively upon the Bible, as the source of divine revelation and historical example of the bounds of acceptable action by believers. John Knox and Christopher Goodman, like John Ponet, were bishops under Edward VI and forced into exile during Mary's reign. Knox's *The First Blast of the*

⁸⁹ 1642: Wing / P2804B. Thomason Collection. 1639: STC (2nd ed.) / 20179. Cambridge University Library.

⁹⁰ Lim, Walter S. H., in *John Milton, Radical Politics and Biblical Republicanism* (2006:31), claims that Milton never actually read Ponet's text but found the citation in *A Short Survey of Presbyterian Discipline*, part of *A Remonstrance Against Presbytery* by Sir Thomas Aston (1641). John Adams, *Works* (1854) p. 4.

Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558), and Goodman's *How superior powers ought to be obeyd of their subjects and wherein they may lawfully by Gods Worde be disobeyed and resisted. Wherin also is declared the cause of all this present miserie in England, and the onely way to remedy the same* (1558),⁹¹ both written in exile, denounce Queen Mary and charge true believers with the responsibility to resist her impious rule. Both locate political authority ultimately in God but see its manifestation in a dynamic interaction between God's prophets, who know and reveal the truth, and civil ministers, who were responsible for enforcing it. The biblical hermeneutics of both Knox and Goodman, as well as their construction of citizenship as an obligation to manifest divine will strongly influence the reconceptualization of political power in the seventeenth century. The discourse of resistance among parliamentarians and religious nonconformists of various stripes employ Knox and Goodman's justification for popular sovereignty and engaged citizenship, while the more radical sects such as the Fifth Monarchists draw upon their prophetic historiography as a source of authority against civil rule.⁹²

Knox's *Blast of the Trumpet* denounces Mary for impiety and declares her papist

⁹¹ STC (2nd ed.) / 15070. Henry Huntington Library.

⁹² Michael Walzer was among the first to argue that there was continuity between sixteenth century religious reformers and seventeenth century 'Puritans'. This positions was challenged by H. Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen* (1970) p. 52 and Richard Tuck, "Power and Authority in Seventeenth Century England" (1974) pp.43-61. Tuck argues that the conviction that no individual subject could be allowed the right of resistance over even a tyrannical ruler was universal among sixteenth century political theorists (p. 45). However, it is apparent in the texts of both Knox and Goodman that the obligation to uphold God's covenant is incumbent upon all people regardless of rank within society. People experience retribution as a corporate body, but individuals have a responsibility to resist tyrants who stand in the way of God's will, to the point of martyrdom if necessary. They contend that the worldly exercise of power ultimately cannot touch true believers but unlike Luther, Knox and Goodman do not see this as relieving people of responsibility to shape the exercise of civil authority.

ministers to be soldiers of the anti-Christ. But behind his vituperative language is a legalistic argument that her rule violates divine prohibition against female monarchs as manifest through the English common law and the laws of nature. He begins with a patriarchal argument about the natural subordination of women, using the experiences of the Israelites as a legal casebook or catalogue of precedent (Kyle 1984:44). Neither the instance of specific examples of women, nor the entitlement to inheritance justified her rule, as there is a prior principle that is evident in the correct reading of the scripture.⁹³ Why he wonders, have those driven to exile by this “Jezebel”, who recognize the illegitimacy of her reign, not spoken out against her? Prophets throughout the old testament played a critical role in advising kings and identifying their lapses to the larger population regardless of the physical suffering it brought upon them. Knox calls upon his fellow divines to speak up against the common error of regarding birth as the basis for monarchical legitimacy. Present day prophets, among whom Knox clearly regarded himself, were obliged to condemn error and tyranny where they saw it regardless of the dangers in doing so. They were obliged, “to more than princes: to wit, to the multitude of our brethren, ... And therefore must the truth be plainly spoken, that the simple and rude multitude may be admonished” (Knox 9).

Knox’s challenge to Mary’s legitimacy effectively posed alternative criteria for legitimate political authority. Divine ordination of political power was not invested in particular rulers to be automatically transferred by birth. Rather, the will of God was actively unfolding in the world and required prophetic discernment and guidance. Where

⁹³ In response to the anticipated challenge to this general rule with the examples of the prophetesses Deborah and Huldah or the daughters of Zelophehad, Knox declares “particular examples do establish no common law. The causes were known to God alone, why he took the spirit of wisdom, and force from all men of those ages” (108).

lineage failed to uphold divine law – understood through the scripture – the godly were required to intervene. Obedience to God trumped all other obligations. God conferred the role of watchman upon his people and this responsibility as Knox presents it, includes killing those who are unrepentant.

In the context of his position as a Marian exile, Knox's Calvinism⁹⁴ turns sedition and rebellion into obedience to divine authority. His conviction that godly people were ultimately responsible for one another and could enact God's will by taking the lives of the unrepentant, manifests quite differently as a doctrine of governance than it does as one of resistance. His effective popularizing of discipline, by charging ministers and counselors with bringing God's will to fruition, more frequently found expression in the action of the state against unrepentant individuals and of neighbors against each other. Presbyterian intolerance followed from the same principle. Knox undoubtedly understood his justification of citizen responsibility to enact divine will as limited to Protestant biblical scholars. Ironically, in the seventeenth century his ideas had far reaching consequences for how common people understood their relationship to political power. Many women, as well as men, became writers and preachers under the auspices of divine citizenship.

While Knox's rhetoric was intended for elite reformers, Goodman spoke directly and unequivocally to all people in declaring a primary, unmediated duty to obey God.

⁹⁴ This is the common characterization of Knox's theological position. It is perhaps not entirely accurate given that the beliefs Knox shared with Calvin were still in formation for both of them and the specific doctrines that came to be associated with the latter had more to do with the standpoint with respect to political power than with theological commitments per se. Knox is claimed within a Calvinist tradition but his ideas clearly influenced other sects whose views did not win the game of defining the tradition. He was at the time a reform minded bishop from Scotland welcomed into the Church of England under Edward and driven into exile with the return of Roman Catholicism.

Goodman asserted that people's political fate was tied to their virtue, a sentiment echoed in many tracts published during and after Mary's reign.⁹⁵ He heralds his discussion of obedience with a quote from Baruch (4) that establishes commonality between the exile community and the Israelites in Babylon. Baruch conveys to the Israelites – on the behalf of the prophet Jeremiah – a confession of national sin and prayer for mercy. Goodman's advice to the exiles is thus, take heart and wait. The nation's suffering was a collective punishment for impiety. Yet Pious action was clearly not sufficient to address the problem, as all members of society suffered under God's wrath. People should respond individually by becoming more virtuous, but virtue alone was not a solution to the larger problem of political corruption. His writing struggles with the question of how virtuous people should act in the context of an impious, hence illegitimate, government.

Goodman argues that people owe obedience to their superiors only insofar as the rulers are in conformity with God's will. In the face of impious rule the question is how people might "dispose and punish according to the Laws, such rebels against God and oppressors of yourself and your country." The quietness Luther advocated was not a

⁹⁵ *Lamentation of England* (Anon.), for example, cites the martyred Latimer's prophetic concern that the king's sisters might marry strangers leaving the nation with a foreign king: "God grant that they never come to coursing nor succeeding, therefore to avoid this plague". The lechery and vice of the magistrates and wealthy of the realm might provoke the wrath of god, "to take from us our natural king and lege lord and to plag us with a strange king for our unrepentant hart." STC (2nd ed.) / 10015.5 . British Library. Latimer allegedly urged people, "yff you say ye love the king, amend your lives and then ye shalbe a meane, that god shall lend him us, long to raygn over us for undoutidly [--] provoke [--]ich gods wrath scripture saith, Dabo tibi regem in furore meo. That is I will geve the a king in my wrath. The text closes with the epigraph, "Oh pray pray pray pray / That god wyll take our wyckid rulers away" (1558). Knox was clearly not alone in his strategy of discrediting the monarch on the basis of more fundamental laws than that of succession and divine ordination of political authority. This pamphlet questioned the naturalness and accord with ancient custom of one whose reign would result in foreign supremacy. God bestowed political authority but god also decreed that foreigners should not rule over England.

sufficient response as it would not result in peace but the wrath of God upon the entire society. Goodman agrees with Luther that the true mission of civil governance is to establish peace so that people can fulfill the will of God. Yet Goodman's experience demonstrates that passivity in the face of tyranny yields not peace, but the persistence of tyranny. The godly cannot be passive bystanders to the machinery of political power and ecclesiastical debates. They must act to secure peace through careful virtuous action. Absolving people of obligation to blasphemous political power is not a doctrine of rebellion, he argues, but the true pursuit of peace.

Goodman's emphasis on the collective context and consequences of individual action is both a pragmatic recognition of the operation of political power and a belief in the direct action of God in the world as a transformative and retributive force. He addresses head-on the problem implied by shifting spiritual authority from church elites to the scripture. Locating religious truth in biblical texts put people in possession of a divine standard against which they could judge their rulers. This democratizing of religious knowledge and authority could unleash chaos if people interpreted individual conscience as justification for taking up the sword against an established civil ruler. On the other hand, if godly people were passive in the face of political oppression how would God's will be realized in the world? The question essentially was who was the historical agent of God's will in the world? Were all worldly developments due to God? If so should Christians just wait until God intervened to change the ruler? Or was God's will manifest through human surrogates? If the latter, then who bore the responsibility for enacting God's will? Was a particular class of people the historical agent of divine will, as Calvin suggested, or did the task of shepherding God's truth into the world belong to

all correctly believing people? Goodman, like Ponet, argues that believers must take responsibility for impious rulers, even if they are not directly persecuted by them. God's wrath against the political community for failing to manifest his will falls on the collective. It affects true believers and heretics alike. In order to bring about the peace that is the purpose of civil authority, Christians must actively shape the exercise of political power.

For Goodman, as for many of his contemporaries, God's favor or wrath was discernible through the consequences that befell a particular group of people. Nonetheless, Goodman recognizes that an outcome based interpretation of God's will is counterproductive to the problem facing his fellow believers. The successful rebellion of a nation against an ungodly ruler could be interpreted as the will of god if it was successful. But by the same logic a rebellion's failure would mark it as a usurpation of power. For example, had all of England resisted the re-imposition of popery under Mary, people might concur that rebellion was "both lawful and godly" because it restored God's Laws and public peace. Yet because many people remained persuaded by Roman Catholicism at that time, resistance was likely to have failed, and would thus have appeared to be without the support of God. By bringing the dilemma of the Christian minority in England to bear on the doctrine of resistance, Goodman shifts the emphasis from the relationship between the corporate political body and God, to the individual's responsibility to God to create and maintain the right sort of political authority. While in the oppressed minority, the English Protestants should seek God through individual moral fortification and resist all civil law that does not accord with God's will.

Goodman refutes the common notion that any secular authority is better than the

chaos that would result if people were free to exercise their own judgment. In direct response to this position, which Hobbes would reassert as the justification of absolute monarchy in *Leviathan* a century later, Goodman declares:

Then who is so mad and impudent, to thinke that peace and quietnesse can be amongst anie people or nation, by observing the Lawes of wicked men, rather then in reteyning the wholesome Lawes of God? That man which is not able to rule him selfe, can better governe his subjects and defende them, than God may his people?⁹⁶

Goodman argued that the peace for which the political covenant was intended required not merely any government, but good government. The claim that religious truth was the true basis of political legitimacy was not merely the last resort of the oppressed. The constraint of godliness was a fundamental condition for realizing the purpose of government.

Deriving the conditions of political right and obligation from the Bible in some respects continued the use of historiography as a strategy of political legitimation started by Henry VII, but significantly developed by Henry VIII. With access to the stories of the Israelites and the early Christians, people were able to challenge political power on the terms of its justification. Tradition, they argued, reproduced corruption; it was necessary to return to the source to understand the truth of god's will. The bible thus became both a resource to answer contemporary dilemmas and a means of historicizing new beliefs and forms of religious practice.

But neither Protestant theology *per se* nor the introduction of the vernacular bible was sufficient to establish popular sovereignty as the basis of political power, or to justify

⁹⁶ Christopher Goodman. *How superior powers ought to be obeyd of their subjects and wherein they may lawfully by Gods Worde be disobeyed and resisted. Wherin also is declared the cause of all this present miserie in England, and the onely way to remedy the same* (1558) p. 192.

differentiation of political and religious authority. The most notable dissident theologians during the sixteenth century did their best to curtail the impact of their own criticism of the bureaucratic hierarchy that mediated people's relationship with God and its entwinement with political power. Like Augustine, Luther and Calvin ultimately shied away from granting priority to individual conscience as the province of God's action in the world. Zwingli understood tyrannical rulers as punishment from God and recognized only a limited right of civil resistance among those who were persecuted for their beliefs. Ultimately it was not monarchy that was called into question but particular monarchs who obstructed the true religion. Where monarchs were friends of reform minded Protestants, their power was uncontested. Even the doctrine of divine right of kings was only a problem where the king's choice of religion differed from that of the reformers. It is notable that Knox challenged Mary's reign for having violated divine law rather than for her persecution of the "true national church." Legitimacy ultimately remains grounded in a transcendent force, of which worldly developments were merely an indication.

As the writings of Knox, Ponet and Goodman testify, experience had a significant impact on the questions people posed and how they interpreted the scriptures. The perception of threat strongly influenced whether individual conscience could trump civil authority. But this was not merely a question of whether the king or the masses were more dangerous; the notion that common people could have political responsibility beyond obedience to the ruler was an extreme departure from the scholastic theory of political obligation that predominated in the sixteenth century. Protestant theology created the tools for reconceptualizing common people as a source of reform and

realization of god's will, but how Protestant theories of governance employed those tools in constructing an emancipatory narrative depended upon context. While nearly all of the Protestant leaders sought to contain resistance to preserve political stability, abrupt power reversals assured that they had to contend with political persecution. In their efforts to respond to the persecution of their communities religious leaders pushed the bounds of the scholastic discourse of political power, but few apart from Ponet and Goodman ultimately broke the frame. Some like Cranmer thought ordinary people should suffer rather than strive to reform the church. Despite having objected to the persecution of Protestants under Henry VIII, Cranmer did not think that religious error on the part of civil authority exempted people from obedience (Lim 2006:34). Obligation to God might result in martyrdom (as it did for Cranmer) but this did not discredit the ruler as God's surrogate. People could pray for their rulers but they could not take an active role in shaping the exercise of power. Calvin, on the other hand, clearly limited the right of resistance to "princes of the blood" on numerous occasions, but nonetheless acknowledged scriptural support for a right of resistance. The escalation of persecution of Huguenots in France (Heal and Grell 2008:16) led to Calvin's recognition of this right – albeit one highly qualified as a state of exception to positive law.⁹⁷

Henry VIII, as Zaller observed (2007) was the first monarch to reign supreme

⁹⁷ Heal and Grell. *Impact of the European Reformation* cite Willem Nijenhuis, "The Limits of Civil Disobedience in Calvin's Latest Known Sermons: The Development of his Ideas of the Right of Civil Resistance" in *Ecclesia Reformata: Studies on the Reformation* (1994). In one of his last sermons Calvin justifies the right of resistance on the basis of Abraham's taking up of arms against the four kings to free his nephew Lot. There was a consensus among Protestant leaders that people should not forsake their beliefs in fear of suffering, but whether one could take up the sword against civil power was another matter. Calvin uses Abraham, as well as Gideon, Samson and Jeptha, to demonstrate that "God often ('souventefois') grants to his servants a special vocation ('des mouvements singuliers') to save their people. (p. 84).

over temporal and spiritual dimensions of the realm. His establishment of the monarchy as head of the Church of England made the person and the theological convictions of the monarch a central political issue and a matter of consequence at all levels of society. Protestant theology and structural changes in the church inspired powerful religious convictions among church leaders and common people alike that many would not readily abandon despite reversal of the official religion. The experience of religious persecution highlighted the contradiction between the unmediated experience of religious truth in the new religion and the biblical injunction that Christians must obey their rulers regardless of their wickedness (Samuel 1:14-16, Romans 13:1-5, Peter 2:13-15).

The doctrines of resistance developed during this period were steps toward reformulating the basis of political authority in several respects. Political authority is newly conceived as a joint project between the ruler and the governed with the goal of progressive realization of God's will. Both parties have a role to play in upholding this mission, and the responsibility of the governed is one of judgment rather than just obedience. The Reformation introduced the idea of the Bible as evidence of God's action in the world historically and through which individuals could discern divine will. The progressive awakening of individual conscience through the scripture that had been a part of Christian tradition since Augustine was central to Protestant theology. At the collective level, the corollary to this doctrine of individual revelation through faith was a political community moving toward an ideal of peace and prosperity in which the godly bore an active role. This new conception of individual believers – regardless of class – as historical agents through which this collective spiritual project was realized, was critical to the seventeenth century notion of republican citizenship and ultimately to justifications

for limitations on state power. It would however, be a century before these nascent changes in political thought developed into a broadly accepted discourse of political action.

Elizabeth I: Cultural standardization through religious uniformity

The Church of England was central to Elizabeth I's efforts to consolidate her power and promote unity in the political realm. She inherited a serious fiscal crisis due to several decades of currency debasement, and faced opposition from Catholics who feared the consequences of a Protestant monarch. Neither did she have full support from Protestants, some of whom thought the head of the English Church must be male and feared that her marriage would subject them to foreign rule. Within a year of taking the throne she passed the *Act of Uniformity* (1559) and reinstated the *Act of Supremacy* (1559). Together these decrees, which were the result of intensive debate in Elizabeth's first Parliament, established the disciplinary framework for the Church of England and put the force of the state behind religious uniformity. The *Act of Uniformity* was the most widely promulgated of all Tudor statutes. It was printed at the beginning of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which it mandated as the official form of worship, and included in all subsequent editions.

The *Book of Common Prayer* (1559) drew heavily on the version issued by Edward VI in 1552 but it made significant concessions to the dominant Roman Catholic population. It adhered to Protestant doctrine, particularly in its rejection of transubstantiation, but to the chagrin of more zealous reformers it maintained the elaborate vestments and much of the ceremony of the Roman church. Elizabeth

recognized popular attachment to ceremony and wanted to minimize resistance to the state church (Somerset 1992:81). The new version also removed prayers against the Pope to make it easier for Catholics to adopt it. In a concession to those who wanted to strip the English Church of its popish elements altogether the prayer book closed with a clause alluding to the possibility of further reform, but also asserting clearly that any such developments were the queen's prerogative:

If there should happen any contempt or irreverence to be used in the ceremonies or rites of the church by the misusing of the orders appointed in this book, the queen's majesty may, by the like advice of said commissioners or metropolitan, order and publish such further ceremonies or rites as may be most for the advancement of God's glory, the edifying of his church, and the due reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and sacraments.

The *Act of Uniformity* mandated church attendance and adherence to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Failure to comply was fined at a rate of twelve pence per absence, payable to the church warden for distribution to the poor. The *Act of Supremacy* targeted church officials and local magistrates with the intention of building a loyal clergy that would enforce these policies in the construction of a unified Church of England. It required all clergymen, magistrates and royal officials to take an oath of allegiance to Elizabeth as the Supreme Governor of the church. Elizabeth's designation as Supreme Governor, rather than as Supreme Head, was a concession to Catholics, and Protestants who shared Knox's view that her gender disqualified her for the position. In the same spirit of conciliation, refusal to take the oath merely resulted in loss of office and was not regarded as a civil offense. Allegiance to 'foreign princes' was treated more harshly, resulting in dispossession for the first offense and prosecution for treason for the third (Somerset 1992:81). Elizabeth also repealed the heresy laws Mary used to prosecute unrepentant Protestants. In one respect Elizabeth's approach can be characterized as an

effort to bring people into the church voluntarily rather than to terrorize them into submission, but she was also hedging her bets against the failure of a full religious settlement. Her accommodations served the dual purpose of minimizing popular and clerical resistance to the national church, and protecting Protestants from persecution in the event that Parliament rejected her proposal.

Elizabeth nonetheless held a moderate course in her reforms and the reestablished Church of England maintained significant continuity with Roman Catholicism in practice and governance. The religious settlement was enforced throughout the country with visits by a representative of the crown decreeing changes in clerical procedure and administering the oath of allegiance among local officials. Fewer than 5% (2-400 out of about 8,000) of parish clergy refused the oath, and thus at the local level there was little change in church or administrative personnel. The church hierarchy was another matter, however. All but one of Mary's bishops refused to take the oath, forcing Elizabeth to include some of the Marian exiles – whom she regarded as dangerous radicals – among their replacements. Neither the newly appointed episcopacy nor the ostensibly conforming parochial clergy was fully accepting of the settlement. Many of the exiles objected to what they regarded as idolatrous aspects of the ceremony and undertook the bishoprics reluctantly.⁹⁸ At the local level, many clergy either avoided the oath altogether or refused to conform despite having taken it. Thus from its inception the church included

⁹⁸ Elizabeth's apparent lack of appreciation for charismatic sermons was another reason for dissatisfaction among the exiles. In January 1560 Thomas Sampson, an Edwardine preacher and Marian exile wrote to Peter Martyr to lament the prospect of serving in a church not only adorned by a crucifix and candles where the celebration of the Lord's supper occurred 'without any sermon': "Oh my father, what can I hope for, when the ministry of the word is banished from court?" Quoted in McCullough (1998) p. 76. Original in *The Zurich Letters* 2 Vols. Hastings Robinson (ed.). Cambridge 1842, 1845 Vol I, p. 63.

a spectrum of beliefs, with adherents to Catholicism overrepresented at the local level among clerics as well as lay people, and ‘Puritans’ in the church government who sought more aggressive reforms. Among the former were Catholic recusants who suffered fines for refusing to attend church services, and ‘church papists’ who maintained their faith in private while outwardly conforming with the law. By the end of Elizabeth’s reign there were essentially four different types of religious practice. In addition to the Catholics, there were also conforming Anglicans, nonconforming advocates of a state-church, and groups of godly Protestants whose practices and beliefs varied considerably (Haigh 1993).

While the Elizabethan reforms did not institute dramatic changes to religious practice, the power of the crown was considerably enhanced by its control of the church infrastructure. The ideological and institutional power of the church provided the monarchy with the means to extend its reach into localities and increase its administrative oversight of numerous aspects of life. It solved various coordination problems of the developing English state, increasing the central government’s capacity⁹⁹ for communication and social discipline and providing a forum for fostering a national political identity.

A number of scholars have noted the increased presence and effectiveness of the Tudor and Stuart states in the localities (Wrightson 1982, 2000; Wrightson and Levine 1995; Schmidt 1997; Hindle 2000; Braddick 2000; von Friedeburg 2002). Several have

⁹⁹ I understand state ‘capacity’ as Skocpol (1985) defined it: “the ability of states to implement official goals, especially over the actual or potential opposition of powerful social groups or in the face of recalcitrant socio-economic circumstances.” Along with Evans, Ruechemeyer and Skocpol (1985), 351-57 and Nordlinger (1981), 8-28, Skocpol emphasizes the relative power of the state and its sources rather than its autonomy.

also remarked on a parallel development of the idea of the state reflected by the introduction of the term into public discourse during Elizabeth's reign (Guy 1988: 352, Skinner 1989: 90-131). Wrightson and Levine in particular emphasize the increase in the functional efficiency and competence of government in responding to domestic pressures (1995: 201). As Braddick and Braddick (2000) and Hindle (2000) both argue, state development was a process of interaction between the various 'offices' or points of articulation of political power and participatory societies.¹⁰⁰ In England, the structure of the early modern state remained largely as it had been since the Middle Ages, but the offices themselves were adapted to new agendas both from above and from below. Robert von Freideburg, for example, points out that campaigns initiated from above were both rooted in, and implemented by, local mechanisms of social control (2002). The church was well situated to address the poverty and social dislocation that had escalated with currency debasement, inflation, and the collapse of the feudal manors that had once contained such problems. By legally subordinating the church to the monarchy, and instituting a campaign to ensure its *de facto* control, Elizabeth made the church a bureaucratic and disciplinary arm of the state.

Mandated church attendance and the church's control over licensing and

¹⁰⁰ J.W. Martin observes that by the mid 16th century religious culture was far more participatory than it had been at the beginning. The laity had gained an important role in church affairs. Part of the change was due to appropriation of monastic lands, but Luther's affirmation of a priesthood of all believers, the availability of the scripture in English and the gradual spread of literacy and printing also contributed to the change. *Religious Radicals in Tudor England*. (1989:114). See also Peter Iver Kaufman, *Thinking of the Laity in Late Tudor England* (2004). Kaufman contends that there was strong advocacy for increased participation from the laity at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign for both doctrinal and practical reasons but by the 1580s support for lay participation had declined among virtually all aspects of English Protestantism. Elizabeth and the conservative divines saw dynamic congregations as politically destabilizing.

censorship of printed materials gave the pulpit exceptional leverage in propagating information and shaping political discourse. Elizabeth I took full advantage of the opportunity it provided to communicate with her subjects by requiring ministers to read designated sermons rather than allowing them to devise their own. She reissued Cranmer's *Book of Homilies*, first published in 1547 with the objective of helping "the disaffected and unlearned" clergy to lead their congregations. The sermons provided instruction on the proper way to worship, and addressed matters of faith, religious doctrine and scriptural teaching. With an average literacy rate of about 5% among women and 20% among men (Cressey 2006)¹⁰¹ the sermon was an important means of communicating with common people.

The *Book of Homilies* freed the monarchy from reliance upon ministers, who often lacked theological training even if they were loyal to the Anglican Church. Through sermons Elizabeth was also able to control the interpretation of scripture with respect to political power and reinforce her subjects' obligation to obey the state. A sermon by Cranmer, "An Exhortation Concerning Good Order, and Obedience to Magistrates" (1547), for example, urged people to recognize and appreciate the political order as a gift from God. The reasons cited for gratitude could be taken from Hobbes' *Leviathan*:

Take away kings, princes, rulers, magistrates, judges, and such states of God's order, no man shall ride or go by the highway unrobbed, no man shall sleep in his own house or bed unkilld, no man shall keep his wife, children, and possessions in quietness; all things shall be common, and there must needs follow all mischief and utter destruction, both of souls, bodies, goods and commonwealths.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ According to Cressey the literacy rate among tradesmen and craftsmen in all parts of England improved to about 50% by the beginning of the 17th century – the greatest advances came before 1580. The literacy rate plateaued in the 17th century between 50-60%.

¹⁰² From the First Book of Homilies (1547) with updated spelling, available at http://www.anglicanstudies.fr/renaissance/documents/homily_10_obedience.htm. The

Another sermon, “An Homelie Agaynst Contencion and Braulynge”¹⁰³, sought to quiet Protestant demands for further reform. It urged Christian unity and denounced contention and debate as pernicious sins – especially contention in matters of religion (Cressey and Ferrell 1996:70). “And yet another, the “Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion” addressed head on the doctrines of resistance developed by Marian exiles like Ponet and Goodman. The sermon affirmed divine ordination of the patriarchal family and civil magistrates: “as well the evill as the good, doe raigne by Gods ordinance, and that subjects are bounded to obey them”. A rebel, people were told, was worse than the worst prince, and rebellion worse than the worst government of the worst prince. Other sermons were simple lessons in proper moral conduct, declaiming against whoredom, adultery, drunkenness, gluttony and ostentation in manner of dress, and affirming obligation to one’s parents, almsgiving, and marriage.

In addition to using the pulpit for edification of the masses and to standardize religious interpretation and practice, Elizabeth exploited its potential to shape opinion where she needed popular support for her initiatives or to respond to specific controversies. Peter Heylyn, the seventeenth century biographer of William Laud, said of Queen Elizabeth, “when she had any business to bring about amongst the people, she used to tune the Pulpits, as her saying was; that is to say, to have some Preachers in and about London, and other great Auditories in the Kingdom, ready at hand to cry up her

1563 version cited Elizabeth I rather than Edward VI as the gift for which people should be grateful to God.

¹⁰³ Attributed to Bishop John Jewel who wrote all but the last of the sermons in the second Book of Homilies.

design.”¹⁰⁴

The church also provided the state with the disciplinary capacity to support its shaping of social behavior and ideology, by fostering what Wrightson and Levine described as a ‘revolution in manners’ (1995).¹⁰⁵ Ecclesiastical courts, which had long controlled matters of birth, death, marriage and inheritance, were now directly under the purview of the throne. Through legally enshrined ‘influence’ over these institutions the central government had significantly greater capacity to track populations, collect taxes and enforce conformity with particular statutes. The Act of Uniformity gave the monarchy the power to intervene in church communities to ensure compliance with the new faith. This strengthened the link between the central government and the local

¹⁰⁴ Cyprianus Anglicus (1671) p. 153. Quoted in McCullough 1998: 59. On the use of sermons more generally see also Ferrell, Lori Ann and Peter McCullough (eds.), *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600-1750*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

¹⁰⁵ Wrightson and Levine’s study of Terling in Essex shows a dramatic upswing in cases of fornication, adultery, illegitimacy and incontinence in ecclesiastical courts. Martin Ingram shows a similar phenomenon in Wiltshire in the early seventeenth century, but also demonstrates that in areas where there was less population pressure there is no evidence of increased prosecution for illegitimacy or pre-nuptial pregnancy – although where it does happen it disproportionately affected the poor (cited in Spufford 1995: 42). Along with increased policing of drunkenness, the attack on illegitimacy can be understood as the conjoining of moral sentiment and village officials’ fear of more dependents in the wake of the 1597 and 1601 poor laws. These laws set up a system of poor relief administered at the parish level and funded by locally levied taxes. Margot Todd (1987), argues that the zeal for social reform often associated with Puritanism was evident among Protestants more generally as well as among Catholics, and was a consequence of mid-sixteenth century Christian humanism rather than Calvinist teaching. Grell and Cunningham (1997) also discuss the extent to which poor relief was becoming a European wide concern in the sixteenth century, a phenomenon fueled to some extent by the emigration and re-emigration of reformed refugees from the Netherlands where poor relief was considerably advanced in comparison to other northern European countries. See especially, Israel, Jonathan. “Dutch Influence on Urban Planning, Health Care and Poor Relief,” Ch. 3 in cited volume, pp. 66-83. Spufford (1998) in Fletcher and Stevenson (eds.) also protests against any easy association of Puritanism with social reform and rejects the notions that “godly discipline” was either novel in the late sixteenth century or a class based enterprise (p. 43).

institution of policies and put the monarchy at the center of many aspects of life. Everyday activities as varied as the licensing of midwives, education, death and childbirth rituals that were once remote from the exercise of monarchical power were now specifically tied to monarchical prerogative. For so-called “Puritans” who sought further reforms in the national church, or who objected to the state church on theological grounds, quietness was increasingly unviable as an alternative to conformity.

Elizabeth also made good use of historiography in cultivating a national sense of both the uniqueness of the Church of England and its continuity with ancient law and custom. John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, which chronicled in horrific detail Protestant persecution under Mary, also traced the English church back through history to the primitive church, characterizing dominance by Rome as a dark period of corruption. In the Anglican Church the English fulfilled the aspirations of precursors to Protestantism, notably the Lollards, in their establishment of a national church. Foxe’s work became a centerpiece of Elizabeth’s effort to create a Protestant historical memory. She ordered that it be put in every church and clerical household. It was revised and enlarged in 1570, 1576 and 1583, and reprinted four more times before the Civil Wars. In Foxe’s work as well as in several other histories written around the time of her ascension to the throne, Elizabeth is portrayed in providentialist terms as a source of deliverance from the suffering under Mary. The *Cooper Chronicle*, originally published in 1549, was updated and reprinted by Robert Crowley in 1559. The first edition, coauthored by Crowley with Thomas Lanquet and Thomas Cooper, traced the succession of kings from the beginning of the world to the incarnation of Christ and through Henry VIII. Crowley added Elizabeth to this line of monarchs in the second edition. Both Foxe and Crowley were

concerned to cultivate a specifically Protestant and English identity. Foxe's work presented saints of the primitive church side by side with early Protestant martyrs, and provided eye witness accounts of suffering that were compelling to contemporary audiences, who may have witnessed the events (Martin, 8). Its inclusion of a range of 'saints' – some of whom had been persecuted for their beliefs under Henry – and portrayal of conventicle life as varied and independent, but nonetheless part of an encompassing national church, provided a persuasive template for Protestant unity. Their work was more agreeable to Elizabeth than were the men themselves however. Crowley and Foxe both despaired of the Roman elements in the Book of Common Prayer, and Crowley was ultimately deprived of his clerical positions and imprisoned for vocally opposing its requirements.¹⁰⁶

In recent years several scholars have remarked upon the republican character of Elizabeth's reign. Ann McLaren attributes its articulation to her gender, and identifies the discourse of republican citizenship that developed during this period as both masculine and godly in character (2000). Patrick Collison sees the Elizabethan 'monarchical republic' as a consequence of the legacy of sixteenth century humanism (1997:44), and Quentin Skinner traces it to the humanist educational program, which focused on grammar and rhetoric (1996). Markku Peltonen demonstrates that the view of citizenship and its link to powers of oration were polarized during Elizabeth's reign (2007:111). Some people saw the extension of these qualities to a broad segment of society as important, while others thought they should be restricted to a small cadre of elites. As

¹⁰⁶ William Camden published epoch making *Britannia*, and Old English (language) was being collected by John Leland in 1550. "The Venerable Bede," one of the earliest codifiers of the English language, dates the English election myth to the 13th century.

with literacy and scripture reading, education cultivated compliance by conferring responsibility for social development, but it also provided the tools for resistance.

Godliness or Compliance: Communal resistance and centralizing authority

The quasi-republican aspects of the Elizabethan monarchy first noted by Patrick Collison (1987) came under increasing pressure in the second half of Elizabeth's reign. The distinction between the period before 1585 and after is so dramatic that some historians refer to the 'two reigns of Elizabeth' (Guy 1995), with the second characterized by more interventionist foreign policy, heightened religious division, and increasing paranoia with respect to the unruly poor. Guy observes that economic conditions increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Rise in vagrancy, property crime and rioting fueled a realignment of class alliances as even small property owners found common cause with the gentry in restraining 'masterless men' (Guy, 1995:11; Sharpe, J. 1995:194). In addition to these external factors, Peter Lake notes that the discourse of republicanism itself contributed to the increasingly authoritarian trend in Elizabeth's administration:

...in the course of Elizabeth's reign, the nexus of attitudes, concerns and practices now habitually organized under the sign of the 'monarchical republic' generated a monarchical reaction, which reached increasingly self-conscious and aggressive articulation as the reign went on (Lake 2007:136).

Elizabeth initially found acceptance among reform oriented Protestants because she was a relief from Mary, and many imagined her church would resume the trajectory the Church of England had taken under Edward VI. In the first few years of her reign pressure to conform was relatively mild, and the more objectionable practices were not

regarded as compulsory by many bishops and clerics. But Elizabeth's effort to cultivate uniformity within the church stepped up after 1564, when Archbishop Matthew Parker began a campaign of enforcement that deprived nonconforming ministers of their livelihoods and imprisoned them for continued recalcitrance. This compulsion in matters of conscience met strong objections from reform oriented Protestants, for whom the presence of idolatrous practices in the national church was a sufficient travesty; the idea of being forced to engage them was unthinkable.

Belief in individual conscience as the mode of apprehension of God's truth and the responsibility it conferred upon believers, led a minority of religious leaders to resist the imposition of such practices and call for change in church governance. Some protested publicly in attempt to pressure the monarchy with popular opinion. As Peter Lake characterized the dynamic between the center and localized demands for reform:

a number of the regime's erstwhile allies and clients started, with increasing intensity and sometimes no little irritation and acrimony, to free-lance in the cause of further reformation, turning against, even as they continued to rely upon, their erstwhile establishment patrons...The process of change in play here was both cumulative and dialectical, as moves beyond what elements in the establishment deemed advisable or acceptable elicited attempts at control, which in turn elicited increasingly shrill protest, which in turn elicited still more draconian attempts at control (Lake 2007:131).

Thomas Cartwright, a central figure in several 'Puritan' controversies,¹⁰⁷ was one driver of this dynamic. As a professor of divinity at Cambridge he gave a series of lectures arguing for a full separation of church and state on the grounds that the church government should be guided exclusively by spiritual concerns. He argued that England was – and the church should be – a mixed polity, echoing the words of Goodman, the

¹⁰⁷ Cartwright was involved in the Vestiarian controversy and disputes over church hierarchy and governance as early as 1564.

Marian exile. In the church Christ was the monarchical element, the elders and ministers the aristocratic, and the people the democratic. Drawing on the *Book of Acts* he advocated a presbyterian church government, in which individual communities were guided by elders united in a commitment to the scripture, rather than an authoritarian state church.

John Whitgift, a loyal conformist, responded to Cartwright by declaring that whatever the operational distribution of power in England, ultimate authority lay with the monarchy. In a reassertion of the doctrine of divine right of kings, he argued that Elizabeth's authority over church and state was conferred directly by God, and Presbyterian church government was fundamentally incompatible with monarchy. A deeper dimension of the conflict between Cartwright, as a voice of the Puritans, and Whitgift, as that of the state church, concerned the role of conscience and scripture in establishing church law. The conformists maintained that the only constraint on civil magistrates was specific scriptural injunction. In matters where the scripture was silent or ambiguous, civil authority was free to enact its own rules. Essentially this position countered the claim that the scripture could be used as a basis for individual resistance to civil authority. Christ left power to the church to regulate public life as officials considered necessary. Individuals did not have authority over positive law and should simply obey, secure in the understanding that their concerns were matters 'indifferent', i.e. they were not fundamental to salvation. Effectively, the lack of specific biblical instructions left the state church free to designate the form of worship of its members. People had no direct line to God through which they could overrule monarchical decisions. The Puritan position, on the other hand, saw the scripture as relevant to all matters of spiritual life, and saw it as an important check on positive law. Magisterial

authority was not a sufficient basis for conformity; the scripture and the goal of church preservation should be the guidelines for church government. Since human beings were the historical agents through which God's will was manifest in the world they had the responsibility to judge and resist illegitimate laws.

The controversy between Cartwright and Whitgift was partly due to the hybrid nature of the English church. Its theology and the identity of many of its early adherents were rooted in scripturalism and the primacy of individual faith. Elizabeth's religious settlement involved fostering a Protestant national identity by appealing to existing communities of the reform faith to legitimize her own rule, while minimizing popular resistance to a national church. The latter objective required preserving religious traditions to capitalize on their existing authority among the majority of the population. But the former, and the success of the church overall involved mitigating the more radical implications of protestant theology for political action. The major question was how to keep people quiescent once they were spiritually empowered. How could the national church direct an increasingly participatory society toward a central authority, rather than allow it to become a justification for community self-determination? As bureaucratic oversight of local communities increased, the narratives of persecution and resistance that initially inspired loyalty to Elizabeth were in ever greater conflict with the encroaching state.

Official intolerance of nonconformity increased in the second half of Elizabeth's regime. The second generation of bishops were far more conservative than their predecessors, whose experience with Queen Mary and foundation in Christian humanism had led many of them to see themselves as active participants in the creation of

government. The idea of England as a ‘mixed polity’ was adamantly rejected in official discourse, and the new ranks of the church willingly affirmed the unmitigated power of the monarchy overall all civil and church matters. Monarchical divine right was also established institutionally when common law judges upheld the power of queenly prerogative to contravene common law.¹⁰⁸ The church establishment increasingly regarded reform theology as justification for lawlessness and apt to wreak havoc on the social order. Whitgift, for example, one of the chief architects of the campaign against the Presbyterian movement, characterized their refusal to comply with the *Book of Common Prayer* and objection to ecclesiastical governance as willful defiance of authority: “Licentiousnesse and lewde libertie” underpinned their ideas; “they proceede not of love, but of hatred... not of myndes desirous to reforme, but of stomackes seeking to deforme and confounde, that which is in due forme and order by lawfull authoritie established”.¹⁰⁹ For Puritans, on the other hand, enforced conformity stood in the way of their capacity to fulfill their godly mission to reform the church. Whitgift zealously and publicly prosecuted nonconformity, executing several leaders for seditious writing and forcing others into exile.

¹⁰⁸ Common lawyer James Morrice brought the dispossession of puritan minister Robert Cawdrey to the Queen’s bench by charging his successor with trespassing. The church benefice was a freehold, and thus governed by property law. Cawdrey had been dispossessed without a trial or confession in violation of the terms of the common law. Morrice turned the issue in the case into the authority of the Queen to empower the High Commission to overturn common law. The judges upheld monarchical prerogative, essentially acknowledging her power in religious matters to be unrestrained by custom or statutory law. See Guy, J.A. “The Elizabethan Establishment and the Ecclesiastical Polity” in Guy (1995), pp. 126-149.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Perrott (1998), p. 37, note 19. Original: Whitgift, John (1572) *An Answer to Certen Libel Intituled, An Admonition to the Parliament*. P. 12.

Indifferency: Hooker's self-authorizing state

Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of the Ecclesiastical Polity* was published at the height of Whitgift's campaign against nonconformity in attempt to reconcile what he saw as the underlying sources of religious contention. Unlike Whitgift, he took Presbyterian reservations as a genuine commitment to religious truth, and tried to persuade them of the legitimacy of centralized monarchical control in matters of religion.¹¹⁰ Striving for a middle ground between Whitgift's expectation of blind acceptance of the law that was redolent of Roman Catholicism, and Cartwright's understanding of the role of scripture and conscience as a check on the execution of power, Hooker presented a theory of church governance that drew upon mid-sixteenth century humanist ideas. He argued that insistence among Puritans on the relevance of scriptural authority in all things incited fanaticism. It was based in the erroneous assumption that an ultimate truth was apprehensible through the intensity of one's resonance with it. If people were taught – as he believed Puritans were – to rely on the strength of their convictions as a guide to truth they could never be fully resolved in the correctness of a particular course of action. Their inability to accept the terms of the established church was due to fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of truth, the role of governance, and individual responsibility to the collective.

Hooker makes use of the notion of 'indifferency' to argue that the particular form of Christian worship was not divinely ordained, but rather was a response to specific historical circumstances and the priorities of collective life. God designated the preservation of order, the most important collective concern, to people to decide for

¹¹⁰ For a full discussion of Hooker's position with respect to Cartwright and Whitgift see Perrott (1998).

themselves. Reason, rather than revelation or scripture, was their tool in establishing the bounds of collective life. The Puritan approach was devastating to government's overriding objective because even if some people were disciplined and sincere in their search for God's guidance through scripture, others would use the scripture opportunistically and justify ego driven claims on the basis of divine intent. Puritan leaders might not be lewd and licentious but those who were could exploit their principles to rebel against political authority (*Laws* i. 39, 177). The goal of religion and religious governance, Hooker argued, was not merely eternal happiness but collective well-being. The rules framing a political community have to take into account a range of human needs, providing basic security as well as cultivating virtue. Presbyterian government was unacceptable because it undermined the most basic requirement of any society.

The collective with which Hooker is concerned is England, which he considers to be a Christian nation despite contentious differences in theology. Membership within this collective required only shared belief in Christ, rather than agreement on doctrinal particularities. Unlike many of the Puritans who drew the lines of membership narrowly, Hooker regarded the various sects as united in their Christian beliefs, the expression of which was a consequence of human reason and historical circumstances. He argued that the English Church was a unique response to the English nation given its range of values, needs and capacities. *The Book of Common Prayer* and vestment of religious authority in the monarchy were a collective solution to the problem of order for a broad Christian community (McGrade 1997:XIX). Church law should be obeyed because it was an expression of a collective will, rationally grounded in the needs of society.

Hooker reframed the authority of the English Church in two important respects.

First, he tied the republican humanist discourse and puritan values into a justification for religious conformity through the primacy he accords to personal religion. He celebrates personal religion as a source of strength and virtue in a commonwealth. The legitimacy of a particular order is ultimately derived from the consent of the people, whose well-being is in turn the guiding principle in the establishment of particular laws. Individual reason and virtue are an important aspect of upholding a particular order, but they cannot be the basis of challenges to it. Reason is effectively relegated to discerning the advantage of collective choices; it cannot be the basis for overriding them. Secondly, he grounds justification of government in uncertainty rather than in claims to truth. Truth is impossible to know absolutely, and the standard of verification at the individual level does not hold at the collective. Government, both civil and religious, cannot establish truth, it can only confer duty. Thus, the proper concern of collective authority is outward action rather than belief. Hooker argues that the task of the state is to promote public life and social order. Where individual opinion is obstructive of these goals it is justifiably suppressed. However, where opinion is held in private and not threatening to public order, it should be tolerated. His position represents a full shift from the medieval notion that the state is the caretaker of the soul and that confessional homogeneity is essential for political stability. Hooker attributes these more comprehensive claims of state power to the Presbyterian position as they follow from the notion that there is a knowable and enforceable truth. He claims for the Church of England the more modest project of care for the nation. Those who see themselves as the preservers of truth in effect become the radicals, not in the propagandistic sense that Whitgift presented them but in their desire to base the church on a standard of unity – the strength of conviction – that was divisive and

destabilizing. For Hooker, the Church of England was a response to the particular needs of the English nation for political order. Other arrangements were possible but this is one that had distinct advantages given the nation's history and collective needs. The church and state were coextensive because England was a Christian nation, but the authority of each was nonetheless grounded in the will of the people rather than in divine prescription.

Hooker's pragmatic argument for the ecclesiastical polity was much like Hobbes' justification of absolute monarchy in *Leviathan* a half century later. Like Hobbes he begins with the his opponent's premises and elaborates the reasons they are in error despite attributing to them (however sincerely) earnestness and good will. His argument ultimately leaves little room for accommodating the concerns of the Presbyterians but it substantially reconceptualizes the basis of religious authority. The ecclesiastical polity did not lay claim to ultimate truth, rather it was authorized by uncertainty. Hooker interprets the protestant theological conviction that individual faith was the only necessary aspect of salvation as giving the state full power to determine the form of religious practice. The church needn't justify its requirements in doctrinal terms; the measure of its performance was the well-being of the commonwealth. Reason rather than intensity of conviction was the proper basis of public life. It was thus the task of the church to make a rational case for its prescriptions, and the task of the believer to use his or her rational faculties to recognize the reasonableness of its requirements. Echoing Augustine, Hooker argues that God is ultimately unknowable in any specific sense. The divine was apprehensible only as a unity:

Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the most High, whom although to know be life and joy to make mention of his name: yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not as in deed he is, neither can know him: and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence,

when we confess without confession that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach... Our God is one, or rather very Oneness, and mere unity having nothing but itself in itself, and not consisting (as all things do besides God) of many things. (Chapter 2.2., p. 55)

Those who would claim specific knowledge of God were in spiritual error because certainty in such matters was impossible. More importantly, they were destructive to political unity and against reason, the worldly surrogates for truth.

Hooker to some extent provided a new foundation for the Anglican Church by framing it entirely in terms of the political nation. It shaped the Anglican discourse against religious pluralism by prioritizing political stability and the need to quell potential unrest driven by religious enthusiasm. It simultaneously established reason and the well being of society as the measure of church governance. Hooker's grounding of church practice within the community and construal of public rationality as recognition of the collective will dominated Anglican discourse against toleration of nonconformity in the seventeenth century. Many proponents of toleration also took his premise that the truth is unknowable as the basis for maximizing freedom of conscience and communication with respect to scriptural interpretation and revelation.

Braddick's view of the state as arising from symbiotic, multisided efforts to secure power and address social problems highlights the impact of the values invoked by early modern magistrates to justify their actions on the way that they were able to wield power (2000: 68-71). The mode of legitimation for the development of government offices also created new possibilities for popular resistance or demand for new uses of governmental power on the basis of the values invoked, or the alleged purpose of the particular office. Religion was the mode of contention in the seventeenth century because it was the dominant discourse of political power, and because it was the administrative

and ideological vehicle for the expansion of the state. The state effectively developed around religious narrative. Full retreat from religion as the primary source of political cohesion did not occur for two more centuries. Nonetheless, diversity within the shared religious identity fostered during the Elizabethan period encouraged the subsequent development of liberal principles and reconceptualization of the relationship between religious and political authority. Decades of contention between local variation of religious practice and the national agenda, along with growing fear of the power of the monarchy to encroach upon deeply held religious beliefs led people to reimagine the state as an agent of civil peace and demand retreat from its role as caretaker of the soul. In this new understanding the state was charged with ensuring security, peace and prosperity. Proponents of toleration argued that religious coercion undermined all three purposes of the state.

As this chapter demonstrates, the notion of religious homogeneity as the basis of a national polity was a material and ideological innovation of sixteenth century monarchical politics. It was a function of the use of religious discourse and institutions to standardize provincial life and orient it toward the throne. The ecclesiastical polity established in law by Henry VIII and developed in practice by Elizabeth I in her over four decades as queen used the church to expand state capacity and project central power into new aspects of life. Elizabeth's creation of a national religion controlled by the monarchy established an intimate relationship between the monarchy and people at all levels of society. The analysis of arguments about the relationship between church and state from this period further demonstrates that Protestant doctrine was plural and contested. Many of its basic tenets could be understood to support republican government, but this was by

no means the dominant interpretation. Fear of the disruptive potential of spiritually empowered common people led Protestant leaders to suppress these implications of indifference. The direct relationship between the individual believer and God was not a source of political power; conscience did not authorize believers to police the decisions of the ruler. Rather, God's immanence in the hearts of believers meant that the trappings of worship were left to the discretion of the state. People were obliged to comply with the demands of civil power, but they could do so without interfering with their prospects for salvation.

By the end of the seventeenth century religious passion and the centrality of religion to social and political life was no less intense, but it had changed in significant ways. Fear of religious nonconformity as a threat to political order was increasingly replaced by a general concern with the security of religious practice. The next three chapters will demonstrate the critical role of religion in the debates that led to the specific conceptual and institutional changes that we identify as the origins of liberal political thought. Within these debates are the seeds of liberty of conscience, expression and assembly; the idea of popular sovereignty; and the idea of a limited and accountable government directed toward securing the interests of the people.

Chapter Four: From the Trew Monarchy to Insurrection

The toleration debates from the beginning of James I's reign to the eve of the English Revolution demonstrate the origins of what contemporary observers understand as liberal political ideas in conflict between the encroaching state and voluntaristic communities. The protestant identity cultivated under Elizabeth I created the conditions for collective challenge to the crown's efforts to control its meaning and expression by mandating uniform religious practices. Common experience of religious oppression and interest in religious reform united people across class, sect, and region to challenge these policies as a violation of English birthright liberties. The discourses of resistance developed by the Marian exiles are revived and expanded to inform arguments for religious liberty; freedom of speech, the press and assembly; separation of church and state; engaged citizenship and progressive social change through individual action.

Two schisms are evident in the seventeenth century toleration debates that prevent easy encampment of the various contenders. On one hand, late sixteenth century Anglicanism had consolidated around a notion of tradition and political necessity in response to the specific historical circumstances of the English polity as the basis for church governance and ritual. Doctrinally, the Episcopal Church elite essentially endorsed the same Calvinist beliefs that informed Presbyterianism and the independent sects. Presbyterians also believed that church practice must respond to the specific needs of the church community, but they wanted small, local church leaders to have control over their communities. In addition to their objections to the practices required by the *Book of Common Prayer* on theological grounds, they regarded the similarities to Roman Catholicism as destructive to the reform effort. Common people could not discern the differences between Protestantism and Roman doctrine if they were not enacted in ritual and reinforced by the charismatic power of the preacher (Fincham 2000:133).¹¹¹ Like the

¹¹¹ Fincham describes reform minded ministers as “pursuing a different set of priorities, what we may call the agenda for evangelical conformity. Issues of ceremonial practice were put aside in favour of building up a resident and devoted Protestant ministry which would advance the gospel and combat the perils of popery, profanity and atheism through

Episcopal bishops, Presbyterians justified the governance of the church on the basis of the needs of the community, but they sought to sustain diverse, self-governing communities rather than a centralized nation state. Presbyterians who regarded themselves as part of the national church were similar to conforming Anglicans with respect to doctrine but wanted decentralized, plural practices within a unified state church. At the end of the sixteenth century, Anglicans and advocates of a Presbyterian government did not differ appreciably with respect to their promotion of literacy and social discipline. Contrary to common perception that “Puritans” were the driving force behind many such reforms, the state church under Elizabeth was equally concerned with fostering virtuous believers through these practices. As the century progressed, popular discourse increasingly associated Presbyterians with oppressive moral reform. Anglicans, in particular cast them as seeking to control, rather than to be tolerated. As Anglicanism became associated with reflexive support for absolute monarchy, republicans accused the state church of hypocrisy, for persecuting peaceful nonconformists while tolerating socially disruptive behavior.

The other major fault line in the debates about the proper relationship between religious and political power concerned the role of individuals as agents of religious reform. Many of the more radical sects regarded individuals as historical agents of change. They grafted new ideas about the individual believer as the source of God’s truth, and the responsibility of these individuals to manifest the heavenly city on earth, onto the

parochial catechizing, preaching and spiritual leadership... The Elizabethan Reformation drew much of its energy from a dynamic alliance of zealous preachers and committed laity, who disseminated the new religion, lobbied in court and in parliament for a more wholehearted evangelism of the nation, condemned many fellow-clergymen as insufficient in life, learning or conduct, and constructed a daunting model of the ministerial office, centered on the pulpit” Fincham, (2000), p. 133.

persistent (medieval) notion that worldly suffering was a consequence of lack of virtue in society. For these people, the scripture was a source of truth that could be properly understood by pure hearted, believing Christians. They held the heavenly city as a standard of justice that was both a legitimate critique of civil governance and a concrete condition that could be realized in political society. While Anglicans shared their notion of spiritual election, they departed from the independent sects in their attribution of a unique historical mission to the English nation as a whole. These more radical groups shared with Presbyterians advocacy of decentralized church administration but many also rejected the idea of the state church altogether. The vision of political reform put forth by these groups relied on a political nation, but they saw themselves as shepherding in a new era of greater equality and well being for all people, by enacting the will of God on earth. Many Presbyterians also believed that the scripture was a definitive guide for social and political life. However, they emphasized community elders and authoritative interpretation, over the more democratic standards of emotional intensity and revelation that were the measure of religious truth for many of the independent sects.¹¹²

¹¹² See Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic* (1992) for a discussion of the nature of religious division in pre Civil Wars period. White rejects the simple polarity between puritans and conformists in favor of a broad spectrum of religious views in which no particular group held a monopoly. For an contrary views see Peter Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church," and Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution," both in Todd, Margot (ed.) *Reformation to Revolution, Politics and Religion in Early Modern England* (1995). Tyacke argues that the Elizabethan and Jacobean churches were characterized by theological consensus; conflict arose only during the reign of Charles I. The major schism he contends, was between anti-Calvinist theology (Arminianism) and traditional predestinarianism (Puritanism). Before Archbishop Laud, "nonconformists and even Presbyterians were never regarded as being totally beyond the pale; they were seen instead as aberrant brethren deserving of some indulgence... Calvinist doctrine provided a common and ameliorating bond that was only to be destroyed by the rise of Arminianism" (p. 56). Peter Lake presents a more complex

Historical longevity was universally invoked in arguments for and against toleration. Both the bible and the idea of the ‘ancient constitution’ were important aspects of how religion was understood in relation to the political community. Some people argued that the possibility of divine truth required open exchange of ideas and interpretation. They regarded common law protection of public discourse as further evidence of England’s unique historical mission. The nature of the political community was at the core of these debates. The capacity of the political community to absorb difference and maintain stability on the one hand, and the obligation of civil authority to foster specific beliefs in its members on the other, were the main axes of debate. Monarchical power was also justified and challenged by invoking history. Monarchical prerogative was asserted in terms of what ‘always had been’ despite clear departure from custom, or extension of power into new areas of regulation. The historical experience of ‘the church’ – both the Israelites and the early Christians – was brought as evidence of divine mandate with respect to the relationship between church and state. Nonconformists protesting persecution, or pleading for liberty of conscience, also made claims to freedom from encroachment on the basis of their English citizenship. Tradition and political stability, the trump cards of the English state church, were turned against the monarchy/Anglican unity with claims to prior law (evident in scripture) and its implications for political order. In some cases, nonconformists argued that more fundamental laws were abrogated through corruption. But despite their disagreements about the implications of divine authorization of political power, advocates and opponents of toleration rarely challenged

picture that includes popery and divisions among predestinarians, but generally agrees with Tyacke that Arminianism exacerbated tensions within the church.

the basic principle that God was the ultimate source of civil power.¹¹³

The categories with which modern commentators approach religious dissenters in the early modern period are far less stable than is assumed in most analyses. The designation “Puritan” or “Presbyterian” masks considerable diversity.¹¹⁴ The groups were

¹¹³ Constitutionalism was also grounded on the idea that God ordained political power. God is the third party who secures the governing relationship between the monarch and the corporate body of the polity. This framing of the governing relationship challenges the notion that the king is God’s surrogate and thus only accountable to God rather than to the people. Divine authorization is developed not only to justify rebellion in certain cases (as discussed in the previous chapter) but to restrict the exercise of political power. Republican humanist theories of government are less dependent upon their religious grounding but they are still grounding in an understanding of political authority as divine rather than stemming purely from popular will. The latter is binding to the degree that it reflects divine will. For example George Buchanan’s *The Law of Kingship Among Scots* (1579) argues that power should be constrained by those who authorize it. Obligation to God ultimately determines individual responsibility within the governing relationship but limited government proceeds from popular sovereignty. James Harrington’s *Oceana* (1651) argues that political power follows from economic power but his model of governance drew from the Hebrew republic. John Milton and Algernon Sidney are similarly influenced by Hebraism, as they sought to ground their political philosophy in biblical truth. These positions are more readily secularized given the dual claim of divine ordination and historical example but the moral weight of property distribution schemes, for example, proceeds from the divine. Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Commonwealth and the Rise of Redistribution* (forthcoming). Henry Parker claims that ‘power is originally inherent in the people,’ that man – not God – is the free and voluntary author of the powers of kings and magistrates. In *Jus Populi or A Discourse Wherein clear satisfaction is given, as well concerning the Right of Subjects, as the Right of Princes* (1644), Parker invokes matrimony to demonstrate that divine security of a union does not obviate human choice: “In Matrimony there is something divine (the Papist makes it sacramental beyond royall inauguration) but is this any ground to infer that there is no humane consent or concurrence in it? Does the divine institution of marriage take away freedome of choice before, or conclude either party under an absolute degree of subjection after the solemnization? Is there not in conjugall jurisdiction (notwithstanding the divine establishment of it) a strange kind of mixture, and coordination, and may not the Spouse plead that divine right as much for a sweet equality, as the husband does for a rigorous inequalitie?”

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of the challenges of naming and the diversity of what has historically been referred to as “Puritanism” see Richard Greaves, “The Puritan-Nonconformist Tradition in England, 1560-1700: Historiographical Reflections,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter 1985). I use the term

defined by their resistance to particular aspects of the sixteenth century Episcopal church and were convenient political constructions more than cohesive social and religious groups. Negative definitions were a frequent feature of the toleration debates as particular groups constructed their own worthiness of toleration against the disruptiveness and moral depravity of others. Who should not be tolerated and why was the point of departure for many arguments both for and against toleration. The intolerable ‘other’ was generally constructed with respect to political stability: Catholics are treasonous, Presbyterians are licentious, or will inspire such behavior in those who follow their beliefs. Later Presbyterians were objectionable less for their potential to unleash havoc than for their ambition to control people’s social behavior. Presbyterians define themselves as like Anglicans in beliefs but different in practice, and distinguish themselves from Anabaptists and Brownists – the real source of social disruption. Anabaptists in turn define themselves against Quakers, whom they condemn for their rejection of oaths and markers of social hierarchy, and lack of respect for power.

Among the main themes in the debates is the relationship between religious belief and practice and political membership. The issue is often framed in terms of whether political and religious communities were (or should be) coextensive, and if so the degree of conformity necessary for social harmony. One pole of the issue with respect to the

‘Nonconformist’ rather than Puritan to refer generally to deviants from the practices stipulated by the state church and the term ‘Separatist’ to refer to religious communities that reject the state church. Greaves cites several 17th century comments on ‘Puritans’ to demonstrate the multiplicity of meanings the term contained. Owen Feltham, for example, in 1628, said that defining Puritan was “a work... of *Difficulty*.” Henry Parker in 1641 declared, “What a vast circumference this word Puritane has.” And Thomas Fuller, who published a history of the English church in 1655 suggested that the word be banned from common usage because it was applied so broadly. Owen Feltham, *Resolves* (London 1661), p.6; Henry Parker, *A Discourse Concerning Puritanes* (London 1641), p.55; Thomas Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain* (London 1655), bk. 9, p. 76.

state church concerns who should be included – the question of comprehension, and what practices could be tolerated outside of the church because of their negligible social consequence. The other pole rejected the state church as illogical and undermining of its alleged spiritual purpose. Advocates of this position demanded not merely toleration, but liberty of conscience. Another core issue is the scope of political power and the practical obstacles to the ideal of religious conformity. Pleas for toleration and assertions of the right to religious liberty cast the compulsion of souls as spiritual violation, akin to rape or slavery. Anti-toleration arguments rest on the notion – thoroughly elaborated by Hobbes – that people are too opportunistic to be self-governing. They argue that those who seek toleration would not extend it if they were in power, and make claims to conscience as a ruse to avoid civil obligation.

The role of dissension in society is also reconceptualized through the debates. Where it was once regarded as evidence of social disharmony and false beliefs it is increasingly framed as a positive force in political life. As participation in society increased a prevailing question throughout the century was how to handle differences of opinion.¹¹⁵ Whether difference should be accommodated, shut down or privatized as Hobbes and others suggested, the problem itself was a consequence of the expanding state. Religious persecution summoned concerns about the fundamental rights of “Englishmen.” The persistence of dissent and fear of a Catholic monarch promoted

¹¹⁵ In *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, Tim Harris estimates that one in ten adult men held public office. Law enforcement in particular relied heavily on popular participation and ordinary people had a great deal of discretion over whether or not cases were brought to court. In many cases peace keeping forces within communities shared the grievances of protesters and refused to suppress them. Imposition of unpopular central government policies at the local level could put local magistrates at risk of reprisal from rioters who might target their property and families (1987: 19-21).

recognition of a common vulnerability to monarchically defined religion.

The Trew Monarchy of James I: “Cursed Parasites and halfhearted Papists”

Catholic recusants and further reform of the state church were central to the question of religious toleration as James I took the throne in 1603. His own concern was promotion of church unity and continuation of the trend toward absolutism, begun in the second half of Elizabeth’s reign. In *Basilikon Doron* (1599), the practical guide to kingship he wrote for his son, James I cautioned against the disruptive power of nonconformists, especially “braine-sicke and headie preachers,” such as Robert Browne (c.1550-1633) who rejected civil authority over the church.¹¹⁶ James distinguished between subversive nonconformists and quietists and expressed willingness to endure the latter, whether (so-called) Catholic or “Puritane.” In his first session of Parliament in 1604 James presented his understanding of the religious situation in England:

At my first coming, although I found but one Religion, and that which by my selfe is professed, publickly allowed and by the Law maintained: Yet found I another sort of Religion, besides a private Sect, lurking within the bowels of this Nation. The first is the trew Religion, which by me is professed and the Law is established: The second is the falsely called Catholickes but trewly Papists: The third which I call a sect rather then Religion, is the *Puritanes* and the *Novelists*, who doe not so farr

¹¹⁶Robert Browne was the leader of the “Brownists” and author of “A Treatise of Reformation without Tarying for Anie” (1582), which urged Christians to embrace their responsibility to reform the Church without waiting for direction from church government. Moderate puritans were at fault for enduring intolerable practices in the Church and should act immediately to stop them. His work was banned in England in 1583 and he suffered repeated imprisonment. Barrow and Greenwood, who were executed in the 1590s were Browne followers. The term Brownist became a common label for nonconformity generally in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Browne is often considered the founder of Congregationalism but he did reconcile with the Anglican establishment later in his life. James I also cited John Penry, an author of the Marprelate Tracts as a particularly objectionable dissident. He was executed for treason in 1593 a few weeks after Greenwood and Barrow as a result of Whitgift’s campaign against nonconformity.

differ from us in points of Religion, as in their confused form of Policie and Paritie, being ever so discontent with the present government & impatient to suffer any superiority, which maketh their sect unable to be suffered in any wel governed Commonwealth” (1604).¹¹⁷

In the interest of reconciling some of the differences among these groups, James I held a conference at Hampton Court in response to a petition from Puritans as he took the throne. When James was not forthcoming with the changes they sought Puritans turned to Parliament for support and James requested a conference between the House of Commons and the Convocation of Canterbury. Despite James’ evident commitment to debate and persuasion as a means to reconcile differences within the church, few reforms emerged from either meeting. The Canons of 1604 that proceeded from Parliamentary review of the established religion essentially reaffirmed the church status quo with some small exceptions.¹¹⁸

Initially James continued the crackdown on nonconformity that characterized the end of Elizabeth’s reign, ordering full compliance with the Canons of 1604. But he declared that he would proceed with “Clemencie, and by weight of Reason, and not by Rigour of Law.”¹¹⁹ Approximately 90 clergy were removed from their posts as a result of James’s campaign to promote uniformity but considerable support for Puritans within the

¹¹⁷ “A Speech as it was Delivered in the Upper House of the Parliament to The Lords Spirituall and Temporall, and to the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses there assembled, ON MUNDAY THE XIX. DAY OF MARCH 1603. BEING The First Day of the first Parliament,” Somerville, Johann. (ed.) *King James VI and I Political Writings*. New York: Cambridge University Press 2001: 138.

¹¹⁸ Manslaughter cases were removed from the benefit of clergy, the king rather than bishops would issue writs for heresy cases in ecclesiastical courts and marriage of the clergy was officially sanctioned. Legislation also stopped the alienation of Episcopal lands, a practice since 1559 (Solt, p.139)

¹¹⁹ 1604 Proclamation, J.F. Larkin and P.L. Hughes, (eds.) *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. I: *Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625* (Oxford 1973), pp. 87-90.

church and among the Privy Councillors¹²⁰ ensured a relatively gentle process of dispossession. Deprived ministers were often able to find alternative posts, and after the initial purge, the Jacobean church tolerated a fairly broad range of theological and practical commitments (Coffey 2000:112, Collison 1982, Fincham and Lake 1993). A number of separatist congregations – who sought separation of church and state rather than a “national community at prayer” – fled England for Holland and later the American colonies. These exile communities contributed to the flourishing of nonconformity and radicalization of religious beliefs in England in the mid-17th century.

Catholics came under much greater pressure, despite their initial hopes that James’ Catholic mother, Mary Queen of Scots, would dispose him favorably toward their cause. In 1603 he proposed an ecumenical council with Pope Clement VIII, in the hope of uniting Protestants and Catholics in one church. James envisioned the establishment of a new ecclesiastical order, one with a moderate church purged of Jesuits and radical Puritans. He envisioned the pope divested of political authority but nonetheless recognized as the spiritual leader of Christendom:

I could wish from my heart that it would please God to make me one of the members of such a generall Christian union in religion, as laying willfulnesse aside on both hands, we might meete in the midst, which is the Center and perfection of all things. For if they [the Roman Catholic] would leave, and be ashamed of such new and gross Corruptions of theirs, as themselves cannot maintaine, nor denie to bee worthy of reformation, I would for mine owne part be content to meete them in the mid-way, so that all novelties mighte be renounced on either side. For as my faith is the Trew, Ancient Catholicke and Apostolike faith, grounded upon Scriptures and expresse worde of God: so will I ever yeeld all reverence to antiquitie in the points of Ecclesiastical policy; and by that meanes shall I ever with Gods grace keepe my selfe from either being an hereticke in Faith, or schismaticke

¹²⁰ Robert Cecil followed in the footsteps of his father Lord Burghley in championing Godly ministers who went against the grain of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

in matters of Policie.¹²¹

For James, religious pluralism could be resolved through collective subordination to absolute monarchy. He was open to tolerating some variation of practice among loyal non-disruptive Christians who accepted his jurisdiction, but would not abide those who placed the church above secular power. Roman Catholics were objectionable not for their adherence to the old religion but chiefly for their belief in the authority of the pope to intervene in political affairs or relieve Catholics of their responsibility to secular rule. Papists and radical Protestants represented a similar threat to political stability in their positioning of the church above the state. The *King James Bible* is one example of James I's effort to reconcile Christendom by emphasizing doctrinal commonality across the various Christian sects, and relegating subversive interpretations of the scripture. The new translation proceeded by committee and encompassed a range of voices from moderate Puritans with a history of Presbyterian sympathies to conservative bishops (Nicholson 2003:26). It relied heavily on the Geneva Bible, which remained the most popular English translation, but the new version was purged of the marginalia concerning resistance and God's vengeance on tyranny (Collison 2003:45, Nicholson 2003:60).¹²²

¹²¹ "Speech to Parliament," March 19, 1604. In Johann Sommerville (ed.) *King James VI and I, Political Writings* (1994) p.140.

¹²² Among Collison's examples is the interpretation of 2 Kings 9:24, David's refusal to kill Saul on the grounds that he was God's anointed. The Geneva Bible presents a different interpretation: it would be morally objectionable for David to slay the king for a private grievance but it would be lawful for him to do so as a public act. See also Greaves, Richard. "Traditionalism and the Seeds of Revolution in the Social Principles of the Geneva Bible," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 7 (1976), pp. 94-109. Nicholson (2003) characterizes the King James version as reflecting a union of emotion, intellect, spirituality and desire. He argues that the translators chose the most ecstatic and sensual among the possible interpretations indicating the physical and emotional immediacy of their experience of divinity pp. 134-5.

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605, in which a group of Roman Catholics sought to destroy the monarchy and the Protestant establishment by blowing up the Houses of Parliament, foiled James hopes for a full reconciliation. The event inflamed anti-catholic sentiment, confirming the general impression that Catholics were treasonous. In a speech to Parliament after the Gunpowder Plot, James presented Catholicism as the only religion that thought “it was lawfull or rather meritorious (as the Romish Catholikes call it) to murther Princes or people for quarrel of Religion.”¹²³ Nonetheless, he argued that a careful approach to retaliation was necessary, so as not to alienate loyal Catholics or incite oppression of Protestants living under papists. In an effort to balance the anti-Catholic sentiment in Parliament and his own interest in peace, James declared that obedience would continue to be the criteria of toleration for Catholics

That it is upon the one part many honest men, seduced with some errors of Popery, may yet remaine good and faithfull Subjects: So upon the other part, none of those that trewly know and believe the whole grounds, and Schoole conclusions of their doctrine, can ever prove either good Christians, or faithfull Subjects (*Political Writings* p. 153)

Further restrictions on Catholics included a new oath of allegiance, renouncing the authority of the pope over the governance of England, King James himself or the realm. Catholics were obliged to declare that the pope could not exempt people from obedience to the monarchy or license rebellion. Penalties for recusancy were also greater. Catholics could no longer educate their children lest they foster traitorous behavior. They were also required to receive communion according to the Anglican rite at least once annually, and convicted recusants barred from practicing law and medicine, military

¹²³ “A Speech in The Parliament House, As Neere The Very Words As Could Be Gathered at the instant,” *Political Writings*. Sommerville (ed.) 1994, p. 152.

service and public office (Solt 1990:149). Notably, treason, rather than heresy, was the crime. In some respects the oath of allegiance required less of Catholics than Elizabeth's *Act of Supremacy* had, because they were only required to renounce the political authority of the pope. James I challenged the more vindictive approach to Catholics desired by the House of Common, citing England's responsibility to a transnational community of Protestants:

Our care of Religion must be such, as on the one part Wee must not by the hote prosecution of Our Recusants at home irritates forreine Princes of contrary Religion, and teach them the way to plague the Protestants in their Dominions, whom with we daily intercede, and at this time principally, for ease to them of Our profession that live under them.¹²⁴

Catholics framed their petitions for toleration in terms of obedience and loyalty rather than political right. A 1603 petition cast the relationship between the king and the Catholic community in near feudal terms as compared with mid-17th century Protestant petitions to the king. The entreaty makes heavy use of flattery and supplicating language, pledging Catholics' willingness, as "vassals" to fulfill any duty or allegiance that a temporal Prince might expect. The author appeals to James personally, on the basis of his mother's experience (i.e. Mary Queen of Scots), for understanding of the Catholic plight. He also makes the more pragmatic argument that Catholic persecution would harm England's international status and lead to a decline in domestic well being. They argue that the practice rendered England odious to all Christian nations. The country's pariah status destroyed trade and incited war, a condition that could be relieved by giving Catholics "as much favor as you have given to others of contrary religion." The petition

¹²⁴ "HIS MAJESTIES ANswere to the Apologetike Petition of the House of Commons, Presented to his Majesty by a dozen of the Members of that House, by their directions" first published 1622. In Sommerville (1994) p. 255.

presents Catholics as more virtuous and less threatening to the political order than other groups, particularly radical Protestants. Catholics, it declares, are unique in their obedience to the law, for they are bound by faith to observe it – unlike Protestants who merely pretend to conform.

Anti-Catholic propaganda and Parliamentary advice to the king at the beginning of James I's reign indicate the degree to which a Protestant identity was already a central feature of the English nation at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Despite their disagreement about the nature of church government, Episcopalians and Presbyterians saw themselves as members of a political community united by Protestant faith and obedience to the monarch. Catholics were anathema to this community, less for their beliefs than for their disloyalty. Christopher Muriell's response to the Catholic petition demonstrates the virulence of anti-Catholic sentiment, and the general character of the arguments against toleration among Protestants.¹²⁵ He characterizes Catholics as inherently deceptive and treasonous, and their religion as rendering them incapable of political loyalty. They lie about their own treatment while adhering to a religion that rabidly persecutes those it dubs heretics. The religion itself was not grounded in truth but in discord. This is evident, Muriell argues in the Roman Church's cycles of denouncing and rehabilitating alleged heretics. The Papist religion was clearly incompatible with a peaceful kingdom. Whatever their claims, by virtue of their religious commitments, Catholics were intolerable.

The Catholic supplication was also published in a 1603 pamphlet 'counterpoysed'

¹²⁵ Muriell, Christopher, the elder. "AN ANSWER UNTO THE CATHOLIQUES SUPPLICATION, PRESENTED UNTO THE KINGS Majestie for a toleration of Popish religion in England." London (1603). STC (2nd ed.) / 18292. British Library.

by a Protestant response.¹²⁶ The Protestant case appropriates the language of the Catholic petition and parodies its claims on facing pages. The author, Gabriel Powel, writing for “the Protestants of England,” provided a brief introduction with the disclaimer that his undertaking of this response was not due to idleness on his part but the entreaties of his friends. He is moved to write out of loyalty to England, against the “vile dealing of the Papists” who mischaracterize their treatment under Elizabeth. After examining the Papists’ grounds for toleration he offers his own reasons why “the Kings Grace will never tolerate Papists in England.” His argument against Catholics proceeds from the notion that the state is constituted and sustained by a nation united in Protestant Christianity.

Among the elements of the Catholic petition that Powel attacks is its characterization of religious divisions in England. According to the Catholics, there were four groups; contentious Protestants, atheists and Catholics, who stood alone with the truth:

The maine of this Realme, if we respect Religion (setting pettie sects aside) consisteth upon four parts: Protestants, who have dominiered all the former Queenes daies: Puritanes, who have crept up apace among them: Athiests or Politicians, who were bred upon their brawles and contentions in matters of faith: and Catholikes, who as they are opposite to all, so are they detested of all, because Errour was ever an enemie to Truth.

Powel inserts marginalia that identify this typology as “a manifest slander of our Christian Church and State.” The dissension between Puritans and Anglicans furthermore, he declares “a flat untruth.” Their differences only concern discipline and

¹²⁶ Powel, Gabriel. “THE CATHOLIKES SUPPLICATION UNTO THE KINGS MAJESTIE; FOR TOLERATION OF Catholike Religion in *England*: WITH SHORT NOTES OR Animadversions in the margine. *Whereunto is annexed Parallel-wise, a Supplicatorie Counterpoysse of the Protestants, unto the same most excellent Majestie. Together with the reasons of both sides, for and against toleration of divers Religions.* London (1603). TC (2nd ed.) / 20141. British Library.

ceremonies, the ‘policie of the Church’ rather than faith and doctrine. The real division, Powell alleges is only between united Protestants and Catholics. The presence of Catholics – the truly subversive element – is due to laxity in enforcement of good laws under Elizabeth.

Powel rebuts the Catholic claim that toleration of Catholics is the path to peace and the esteem of other nations. He claims that these goals are best realized by maintaining the “true religion” and disallowing the superstition and idolatry practiced by Catholics. In his self-defined role as representative of a united Protestant nation, Powel clearly wishes to see James consolidate the reform mission rather than promote a broadly encompassing unity. Matters indifferent do not challenge the fundamental unity of the church, only diabolical Catholics do by refusing to accept the political frame of religious membership. Powel further characterizes the Catholic petition for toleration in exchange for loyalty as “mercenary,” and evidence of their fundamentally treasonous character. Catholic exchange of loyalty to the king for serving their interest defies the spirit of membership, which for Powel involves full acceptance of the authority of James as the delegate of God in matters of church and state. The Catholic claim that diversity of practice is already tolerated, and that Catholics are harmless in comparison to Atheists and Puritans is irrelevant from Powel’s point of view because he rejects political arguments for toleration altogether. On one hand, Catholics are incapable of being what they promise. On the other hand – and more importantly – Catholics are intolerable because they refuse the basic terms of political membership: acceptance of the ecclesiastical polity. Furthermore, kings and princes are bound in conscience, “to plague and torment all papists, to give them double payment, to antiquate and abolish all Romish

and Popish abomination.”

In other works Catholics are more kindly characterized as merely in error, rather than as willfully deceptive, but they were no less repugnant to the English commonwealth for their lack of enmity. Matthew Sutcliffe, for example, a royal chaplain under Elizabeth I and James I, alleges that the principle flaws of Catholics are their ignorance in matters of state, and lack of loyalty or love of their country.¹²⁷ They falsely claim a venerable tradition of worship and the title “Catholique, but in fact, he argues, popery is an innovation, one need only look at the several monarchs that preceded James. Mary is conveniently absent from his list. Sutcliffe expresses a desire to see Papists seek reconciliation with the English church and nation. He regrets, however, that in actuality they just want to continue in their mischievous ways. What they ask is “derogatorie to God’s honor, or more prejudicial to the Kings majesty and State.” All “true Christians” must be committed to the cause of true piety and the safety of the country, both of which are undermined by tolerating Catholics. Sutcliffe writes from this godly position of concern with the integrity of the state and fear that the Catholic petition might win favor with the King. Yet he also seeks unity with the Catholics once they recognize their error. Citing St. Augustine’s dealings with the Donatists he claims, “We doe not hate you, as our Countrimen, but detest your errors, being humorously affected to forraigne superstition.”

Anti-Catholic propaganda was also quite common, especially in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, and many arguments against toleration of Catholics relied almost

¹²⁷ Sutcliffe, Matthew. THE PETITION APO-logetitcall of Lay papists, calling themselves *the lay Catholikes of England*. Addressed to Bishop Duresme. London. (January 1605). STC (2nd ed.) / 23452a. Folger Shakespeare Library.

exclusively on slander, invective and hyperbole. Joachim Beringer's "A True Relation by Way of Historie, Discoursing Upon the Trecheries, Insolencies, and Tyrannies, which the Romane Popes from time to time have practised, upon, and against the sacred Maiestie of the GERMAINE Empire: And so by insinuation, upon all Christian Kings, Princes, and free Common-weales" (1609), attributes untold crimes to the Catholic church throughout history and demarcates international alliances on the basis of faith. The Roman popes were essentially illegitimate occupiers of Christian nations, who had corrupted and misled Christendom. Being free of them, England once again regained the path to truth. The tract concludes with lists of previous popes, classified on the basis of their sins, including categories like "drunkards," "atheists," "sodomites," Turkish pensioners," "Monsters," "warriours and bloud-succours" and "incestuous persons."

Opposition to toleration of Catholics largely focused on doctrinal error and political stability. Catholics meanwhile, pleaded for exception to laws governing religious practice on the basis of the longevity of their tradition and loyalty to the throne. Arguments against monarchical power over religion were distinctly absent from Catholic appeals. This is most likely because the success of their claims relied on effectively challenging the discursive construction of the "old religion" as a seedbed for traitors. Liberty of conscience arguments were present, but less common, among Presbyterians who sought control over their own spiritual practice but were not eager to tolerate Catholics. Presbyterians could reconcile the problem of toleration of protestant nonconformity with intolerance for Catholics by claiming unity within the English Church and distinguishing between harmless deviance and beliefs that incited treason.

*Early Separatism: “Mens religion is betwixt God and themselves.”
Thomas Helwys (1612)*

A number of Presbyterian arguments reject the imposition of ceremonial uniformity on the grounds that civil power had no jurisdiction over religious matters. William Bradshaw, a friend of Thomas Cartwright, argued that the authority of bishops and archbishops was illegitimate.¹²⁸ Religious worship was either established specifically by God or left to the discretion of individuals. The magistrate had no power to decree specific modes of worship nor was tradition binding where it contravened religious law:

For all spirituall power usurped over the Churches of God, is an Antichristian authoritie, and to professe spiritual homage thereunto is to professe spiritual homage unto the Antichrist, which must needs be a sinne.¹²⁹

Bradshaw argued that the ceremonial constraints imposed by the Canons of 1604 were utterly arbitrary. If one acknowledged the power of the magistrate to impose the surplice on ministers, the magistrate might just as well impose a livery jacket as the proper mode of religious dress. Bradshaw rejects both Whitgift's argument that religious practice fell entirely to the discretion of the monarch, and Hooker's more nuanced argument that indifference rendered these details of worship civil matters because they promoted worldly peace and political unity. Bradshaw's choice of language implies a comparison

¹²⁸ Bradshaw is a good example of the less persecutory approach to conformity during James reign. He was removed from his congregation at Chatham for refusing to use the *Book of Common Prayer* but was provided a home and a license to preach by a wealthy patron in Burton and quickly developed a large following. This is not to overstate the case, however, as persecution did persist. In 1611 the Baptist, Edward Wrightman was the last religious martyr to be burned at the stake. Other separatist leaders were imprisoned for refusing to take the oath *ex officio*, notably Thomas Helwys.

¹²⁹ William Bradshaw, *Twelve Generall Arguments, Proving that the Ceremonies imposed upon the Ministers of the Gospell in England by our Prelates, are unlawfull; and therefore that the Ministers of the Gospell, for the bare and sole omission of them in Church Service, for conscience sake, are most unjustlie charged of disloyaltie to his Majestie* (1605). STC (2nd ed.) / 3531. Cambridge University Library.

of the Anglican church with that of the papist anti-christ. He argues that civil and ecclesiastical authority are rational opposites, despite their apparent similarities in certain respects. By attempting to collapse these distinct powers in defiance of the scripture, the Anglican church persisted in the worst aspects of papism.

Beringer also contrasts the eternal and universal character of the true Christian church with the temporal and geographically bounded nature of political authority. He argues that there were three stages in the development of law, and political and religious power diverged with its evolution. Prior to written law, the Old Testament “fathers” wielded power over both political and religious matters. With the advent of the law of Moses, “God manifest his determinate pleasure in distinguishment of eithers Authoritie: The *Priests* to Teach, to Sacrifice, to Pray: The *Princes* with the people, to sit in judgement, to observe Discipline, to procure Peace, and that according to *Order* and *Equitie*” (2).¹³⁰ The true church inaugurated a new era however, when Jesus, “in the new priesthood,” refused involvement with temporal government and took control only of spiritual matters. His kingdom thus transcends transitory political boundaries to be eternal and encompassing. The mark of truth for Beringer, as for many non-conforming ministers, was focus on the spiritual alone. To subordinate religion to a political purpose was to defile it and expose its illegitimacy.

Unlike the republican arguments from the mid-sixteenth century and the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, protestations against the ecclesiastical hierarchy and

¹³⁰ Beringer, Joachim. *The Romane Conclaue VVherein, By Way of History, Exemplified Upon the Liues of the Romane Emperours, from Charles the Great, to Rodulph Now Reigning; The Forcible Entries, and Usurpations of the Jesuited Statists, Successiue Practised Against the Sacred Maiestie of the Said Empire: And so by application, against the residue of the Christian kings, and free-states are liuely acted, and truely reported* (1609). STC (2nd ed.) / 24526

subordination of the church to civil authority rarely engaged the issue of individual responsibility to church reform and political resistance. The authors frequently characterize their interventions in terms of social responsibility. They present themselves as beseeched by friends to take up the pen against injustice, or declare that they would prefer to live in peaceful obscurity but have been, as Bradshaw put it, “draug’d into [the debate] by the very haire of our head.” In effect, the state’s imposition on their religious practice and livelihood left them no other course than to protest in writing. The arguments themselves however, were largely concerned with the structure of authority rather than the rights of the individual. Puritans sought contained realms of influence and discretion, rather than a united and uniform church. The question was the scope of the disciplinary institution rather than religious authorization of social control.

Appeals for liberty of conscience did, if rarely, figure among Presbyterian arguments against conformity however. They involved both the prudential claim that persecution undermined its purported objective and damaged the moral authority of England, and a principled challenge to the practice of spiritual coercion. Leonard Busher’s 1614 tract, *Religions Peace: A Plea for Liberty of Conscience*,¹³¹ is the most comprehensive case against religious persecution and compulsive church membership. He elaborates the benefits of ‘permission of conscience’ for the polity as a whole, and outlines an approach to dealing with differences of opinion and containing potential insurrection on the basis of religious doctrine.

¹³¹ Busher, Leonard. *Religions peace or A reconciliation, between princes & peoples, & nations (by Leonard Busher: of the county of Gloucester, of the towne of Wotton, and a citticen, of the famous and most honorable city London, and of the second right worshipfull Company) supplicated (vnto the hygh and mighty King of great Brittainne: etc: and to the princely and right Honorable Parliament) with all loyalty, humility and carefull fidelity.* Amsterdam (1614). STC (2nd ed.) / 4189. Henry Huntington Library.

Busher presents his intervention, which is addressed to both Parliament and the king, as his political duty. In doing so, he echoes the claims of divine responsibility for republican citizenship made by the Geneva exiles and Protestant leaders at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. This republican spirit can also be seen in Thomas Helwys's argument against compulsion of conscience on the grounds that people stood in an unmediated relationship to God.¹³² Religious coercion did not alleviate spiritual responsibility but it would likely have the destructive effect of fostering complacency and helplessness in matters of conscience:

O Let the King judge is it not most equal, that men should choose their religion themselves seeing they only must stand themselves before the judgment seat of God to answer for themselves, when it shall be no excuse for them to say, we were commanded or compelled to be of this religion, by the king, or by them that had authority from him (1612).¹³³

Helwys introduces the same work by enjoining his readers to see that the duty of subjects to preserve the king in body regardless of the risk they incurred was dwarfed by their responsibility to his soul: "The feare of the almighty (through the work of his grace) having now at last overweyed in us the feare of men, wee have thus farr by the directiō of Gods word and spirit stretched our harts and hands with bouldnes to confesse the name of Christ before men, and to declare to Prince and People plainly their transgressions." If the King had any care for his own soul he should heed Helwys's council in matters of religion because he spoke out of a duty to God and to the people.

Busher's approach also reflects James' strategy of inviting discussion and debate

¹³² Helwys founded the Baptist with John Smyth. They fled to Amsterdam in 1608 when their separatist congregation came under pressure from the High Court of Ecclesiastical Commission died in prison in 1616.

¹³³ Helwys, Thomas. *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity* (1612)

within the boundaries of absolute monarchical authority. The question of liberty of conscience is justified primarily in terms of its consequences for peace, but it also challenges the logic of compulsory church membership by demonstrating the fundamental differences between the two types of communities. Busher argues that the state's interest in the church, and the goal of conversion whether proper to the state or not, are best achieved through persuasion rather than compulsion: "No Prince or People can possibly attain that one true Religion of the Gospel which is acceptable to Jesus Christ merely by birth" they must be born "by the word and Spirit of God" and thus the word is also the only proper way to maintain and defend religion. Forced acceptance of religion and the notion that the religion of the monarch determines that of the nation are "Antichristian, Romish and cruell laws" that should be revoked.

Busher argues that persecution and compulsion in matters of conscience is fundamentally un-Christian. Scripture, particularly the life of Christ does not support it, and forcing people against their consciences goes against the Christian maxim to "do unto others." As the magistrates object to coercion by Rome, they should not prevail upon the consciences of others. Persecution is about power rather than religious truth and authorizing it runs the risk of supporting spiritual error, "It will come to pass that the Ambassadors of the onely Spirituall Lord and King Jesus, may be persecuted and imprisoned, burned, hanged or banished for delivering the message of their gracious Lord."

Busher also argues that the moral authority of Christians was undermined by persecution. If Christians burned or banished people for nonconformity they justified the same actions by Papists, Turks and Pagans against Christians. They fail to provide a

moral example of mercifulness and perpetuate a cycle of persecution. In persecuting Christians are worse than Turks, who merely enslaved people in body rather than in conscience. Protestants claim the liberty of the gospel, but where there is such liberty there is no persecution for any difference in religion, nor compulsion in matters of conscience. Ultimately liberty of conscience is prudent because it furthers the gospel and contributes to the well being of those who profess it. Furthermore, the Christian maxim, “do unto others” provides a generalizable ethic that can govern relations between communities that believe different things. Busher essentially advocates mutual respect between people, communities and states as the ultimate expression of Christianity.

In addition to dividing the church and discrediting Christians in the eyes of foreigners, Busher argued that religious compulsion is incompatible with political well being. Ministers do not have the truth by virtue of their positions, nor do Kings and magistrates. People are susceptible to spiritual error, he argues and putting the power of the sword behind enforcing a particular truth obviates the real emergence of God,

therefore if permission of conscience and libertie of the Gospel be not granted and burning lawes repealed, then the Bishops & Ministers now may persuade and cause to be burned, both the Books, the & Authors that have the truth instead of heresy and hereticks, even as their predecessors have done already, and so shed more innocent blood, and also provoke the Lord to further wrath against the King and State.

Political stability is best served by full toleration and open debate in matters of religion. Scripture could serve as a check on ungrounded political claims, and basic standards of civility could ensure a peaceful and productive exchange of interpretations. Charismatic preachers who drew only on the force of emotion and their own personalities might be a threat to peaceful interchange, but the written word would reveal their errors:

That for the more peace and quietness, and for the satisfying of the weak and

simple, among so many persons differing in Religions, it bee lawful for every person or persons, yea Jews and Papists, to write, dispute, confer and reason, print and publish any matter touching Religion, either for or against whomsoever, always provided they allege no fathers for proof of any point of religion, but only the holy Scriptures, neither yet to reproach nor slander one another, nor any other persons, but with all love, gentleness and peaceableness –one another to the glory of God, honor of the King and State, and to their own good and credibility which means both few errors and few books will be written.

Busher cites the Brownist non response to challenges in print as an example of their disingenuousness. For him freedom of the press would ensure honest public dialogue and facilitate consensus in religious matters. The sword and the gallows, on the other hand, “is a good means to spill blood and make an uprore in the land but not to bring any man from one faith to another.” The most religious, and therefore the best source of social guidance, are the most persecuted under the state church. They have little access to print because they are poor as a result of their oppression and thus the public is denied a valuable resource in the pursuit of truth. Traitors should be restricted, but a polity united in the commitment to truth required full toleration of scripturally grounded religious differences.

Thomas Helwys’ argument for liberty of conscience and separation of church and state, along with that of Busher informed many of the nonconformist arguments for religious toleration during the civil war period. With the relaxation of censorship laws in the late 1630s there was a tremendous increase in the number of pamphlets advocating toleration and endorsing freedom of speech and press to facilitate religious debate. These works represented a much broader socio-economic range in their authorship and significant influence from nonconformist sects. As one of the founders of the Baptist congregation and an exile in Amsterdam Helwys was particularly influential on the

development of resistance narratives and the idea of spiritual responsibility toward the nation that inspired political action among ordinary people.

Helwys argued for strict separation between church and state. In an argument reminiscent of early Luther, he rejected the idea that civil authority could have any influence on spiritual matters, and that conformity achieved through punishment would be of any merit to God. If fear of God “will not prevail to bring men under obedience to his own laws, what can our lord the kings sword do? It is spiritual obedience that the Lord requires, and the kings sword cannot smite the spirits of men” (37). Religion should be a matter of free choice – even for “them of the Romish religion” because coercion was futile: “For men’s religion to God is between God and themselves. The king shall not answer for it. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure” (53).

Helwys further rejected the demand for comprehension and internal reform pursued by the Puritans. The Anglican church structure derived its authority from Rome rather than from the first apostles as they claimed, and Puritans and Anglicans were no different in their perpetuation of its pretence. A “presbytery, hierarchy, and a decreasing synod [...] would have been no more pleasing to God than an hierarchy of archbishops and lord bishops, and a canonical convocation house.” Separation was the only legitimate way to preserve peace and care for the integrity of the church. Against the Presbyterians he argued that religious leaders should be chosen and ordained by their communities rather than by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Presbyterians and Anglicans “have both one mind with the beast, and give the right hand of fellowship one to another, seeking and exercising one power which is to rule over men’s consciences by their own laws and

decrees” (Helwys 1612, Grove 1998:74).

One of the striking aspects of Helwys vision of the relationship between church and state is his emphasis on civic responsibility in addition to godliness. He rejected the idea that true believers could withdraw from the world, or that the proper response to persecution was to take refuge in a more tolerant country. The Christian commitment involved witnessing the truth to one’s fellow citizens – even if it entailed martyrdom. He calls upon his fellow expatriates to “come and lay down their lives in their own country for Christ and his truth.” Martyrdom was an effective form of teaching, “For the disciples of Christ cannot glorify God and advance his truth better than by suffering all manner of persecution for it, and by witnessing it against the man of sin with the blood of their testimony.” Furthermore, one’s civic duty involved presenting the truth to political authority regardless of the consequences. The king pretended divinity in controlling religious practice. In appropriating a power that belonged only to God he put his soul in peril.

At the outset of *Mystery of Iniquity* Helwys declares that citizens have a duty to the King to preserve his soul from threat even greater than their obligation to preserve his body from danger. They are bound to seek the salvation of the king by exposing the truth regardless of the consequences to themselves. Rhetorically he relies on the filial obligation of a subject to the ruler but Helwys characterizes the political relationship in terms of equality and mutuality. Spiritual truth was not tied to one’s social or economic position; people were equally likely to be the bearers of truth even if they were not equal in their understanding of it. Equality of spiritual capacity conferred on all people responsibility for public life. Thus the simplest person could be the king’s teacher and

that person was duty bound to speak the truth as he or she understood it.

Helwys argues for full religious liberty on the basis of indifference and the alleged purpose of the church laws: peace and unity. Liberty of conscience more effectively realizes the stated objectives of the political community and the church community alike. One cannot compel conformity in matters of conscience and to try to do so only encourages deception. If matters are indifferent, regulating them reproduces the oppression that Protestants have supposedly thrown off in the Roman church. On the other hand, if no aspect of religious worship is indifferent then the state church compels people to sin. The identity of both the church and the political community are at stake in forcing their entwinement: the integrity of the church is compromised when it is compelled to house nonbelievers and the authority of the state is discredited when it encourages spiritual debasement among its members.

This justification for complete liberty of conscience and the responsibility of believers for the condition of the state is reflected in Nonconformist arguments for toleration that became prevalent in the late 1630s and persisted through the civil wars and Interregnum. Helwys's vision of the church draws upon the Augustinian distinction between the heavenly and earthly cities that informed Luther's early theology, and manifests its full implications. He argues essentially that the state church collapses the two realms by subordinating religious worship to civil authority. Religion requires voluntary commitment, and individual experience rather than doctrine and ritual is the measure of religious truth. For both Helwys and the separatist communities that shared his ideas, the church was a covenant among believers united in a particular understanding of God rather than through birth or ritual induction. In this respect it differed dramatically

from the political community, where territorial residence or birth determined membership and obligation.

In these formulations the individual and the religious community stood in a dialectical relationship that was mirrored by that of the church and state. The individual, through scriptural interpretation, virtue and prayer, was the source of vibrancy and change within the religious community – and ultimately the agent of God’s truth in the world. The individual needed the community for guidance and spiritual development but the community’s positive effects required voluntary membership and full commitment to the truth among its members. The community needed to retain the right to expel people in order to preserve the collective understanding of truth from false claims and secure its practices from those who refused to live within their dictates. The transformative power of religious experience required freedom, but the community required boundaries and rules in order to preserve itself, and educate and sustain its members. The church – or several churches – required the state to maintain civil order and peace. But the church also required autonomy from the state in order to cultivate virtue, as the state managed the competition of interests. As Katherine Chidley, the leader of a separatist congregation would assert in 1641, if the distinction between the spiritual and political communities is not maintained spiritual communities inevitably take on political characteristics. Civil authority is necessary to address practical problems but its vibrancy and the quality of justice it enacts is dependent upon an external standard of truth that can only be pursued with full spiritual autonomy. Lacking an autonomous state the church is forced to engage material interests; lacking an autonomous church the state is without a source of reform and renewal. Civil authority was still ultimately grounded in God despite the strong

distinction between the two realms. For Helwys and many of the sects who followed him, however, divine authorization of political power mandated citizen engagement to ensure that it was executed properly.

Busher and Helwys are both examples of the impact of the Amsterdam experience on Nonconformist thinking. On the basis of extensive research on Dutch Puritanism and English exile communities in the Netherlands Keith Sprunger contends that the vibrant, cosmopolitan intellectual culture in Amsterdam and Leiden nourished separatist religious thought much as the Geneva experience had for the Marian exiles. Sprunger argues that from the later years of Elizabeth when religious dissenters - mostly Brownists – fled to the more tolerant Netherlands to escape the Whitgift campaign until the eve of the English Civil Wars, Nonconformist political thought grew increasingly more sophisticated. Intercultural engagement and acquaintance with classical texts such as the Hebrew scripture and works by Plato and Aristotle mellowed the populist, anti-intellectual spirit of the early separatists. Many of the early spiritual refugees Sprunger characterized as pursuing a “sanctified exclusiveness,” emphasizing spirit over intellect and avoiding contact with other churches for fear of antichristian contamination. Brownists even shunned buildings that had been used by Jews or Catholics for worship, declaring that they were better suited for barns than as houses of worship (Sprunger 1994:48). Experience with a variety of Christian sects as well as with Jews, Arabs and Turks in Amsterdam pushed many people to consider the implications of other cultures in their theological and philosophical reflection. Diversity came to be a value for many of the Nonconformists. The ‘Babel’ of Amsterdam came to represent freedom, while England was characterized as the true Babylon for its wicked, persecuting ways

(Sprunger 1994:46). As the century progressed the Dutch experience loomed large in both toleration and anti-toleration arguments as an example either of the economic, intellectual and spiritual benefits of toleration – or of its sinful, distorting consequences.¹³⁴

These communities also nourished Protestant thinking within England by publishing books and pamphlets that were smuggled in to England to avoid the strict censorship laws that were in place until 1641. Open communication of ideas, particularly in the press but in speech as well were considered critical to the progress of the truth in the world. The action of God through individuals required public encounter with ideas and opinions through print because it was the most public form of communication. Many argued that the best way to deal with evil or false opinion was through full disclosure and open debate. When subjected to rational argument based in the scripture deception would be revealed for what it was. Attempting to control the truth by instituting a single orthodox view would only strengthen false ideas by driving them underground where they would not be exposed to the light of public reason. Public vetting of ideas was the best means of sorting true from false claims, the voice of God from that of the devil. *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience*, for example, laments the uncivil nature of public speech but objects to any general restraint of opinion because it would hinder the emergence of truth, “better many errorours of some kind suffered, than one usefull truth be

¹³⁴ One example of the latter use of Amsterdam is a 1647 pamphlet, *Londons Metamorphosis: Or, A Dialogue between London & Amsterdam*. Amsterdam says to London, “We two are like Judah and Samaria, thou retainest still somthing of God, some truths thou mixedst with abhominable errorours, I am wholly estranged from God, and worship him represented in golden calves, Judah was a City after Samaria’s ruine, so mayest thou have a name when I am an heap of stones, yet certainly if thou doe not repent, expulse and erect, forsake thy errorours, extirpate heresies and set up Gods true Religion, I shall but be they president, and it shall be said of thee, even as Babilon” (p. 6)

obstructed or destroyed” (1645).¹³⁵

Nonconforming ‘Puritans’

Nonconformist thought within England and abroad developed arguments for separation of church and state, for popular sovereignty in matters of church governance and for citizenship responsibility in preserving the political covenant. Katherine Chidley, for example, in a 1641 tract entitled, *The Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ*¹³⁶ makes a case for religious toleration and independent church government on the grounds that union of church and state is illogical and destructive to the religious community. Arguing from scripture and the experiences of the early Christians as historical example, Chidley contends that the church periodically withdrew from the world and expelled unbelievers in order to purify itself. God could not have ordained complete unity between the spiritual and political realms or this separation, which was clearly critical to the survival of the church, would not have been possible. She argues that the terms of membership of the two communities also differ. Membership within the political community is compulsory, while the spiritual community is formed through voluntary commitment to God and demonstrated through obedience to his laws. The two communities exist in a dialectical relationship and the effectiveness of each is

¹³⁵*The Ancient Bounds; or, Liberty of Conscience, Tenderly Stated, Modestly Asserted, and Mildly Vindicated.* Anonymous (attributed to Francis Rous). (1645).

Thomason/E.287[3]. British Library. The book argues that conscience is God’s throne and thus cannot be the source of vice. Generally it does not depart from regarding the Christian magistrate as responsible for protecting the true religion and suppressing heresy. The argument is ultimately against coercion rather than a full defense of liberty of conscience. Persuasion, profession and teaching are appropriate ways for magistrates to pursue the truth; physical force is not.

¹³⁶ Wing / C3832. Thomason Collection.

undermined if they are collapsed under a single authority.

Governance of these voluntary associations comes from the collective will of the believers acting in good faith – rather than through hierarchical church authority or a lineage of ordained ministers. The communities are formed through individual will and that will is in turn the source of authority within them. Members of these godly communities were not a threat to the public order as many of their adversaries claimed, but law abiding citizens, who were willing to accept the jurisdiction of the magistrate in civil matters. Chidley characterizes the unchecked power of the government to regulate matters of conscience as a state of tyranny. Toleration of diversity of religious practice in autonomous communities was much less of a threat to the public order than the state church. Diversity and decentralization of religious authority would both prevent corruption and arbitrary exercise of power, and create space for the emergence of God in the world through individual believers.

Like Helwys, Chidley sees the spiritual reform mission of pious people as politically consequential. Spiritual escapism was not a viable strategy. Believers should stay a part of the larger political community because their spiritual devotion depended upon its preservation of social order but also because their example would encourage a more just society. The political community provided a frame within which the truth might emerge but it could not in itself be an agent of that truth in the world. The transformative power of religion in political life comes through individual freedom to embrace and enact truth. Coercive imposition of doctrine or practice only serves corrupt institutions and inhibits this vital reform mission of the church. The legitimacy of the state, she contends, rests with the degree to which it realizes its fundamental ethical purpose to secure the

conditions for people to pursue the truth.

Chidley, along with a number of other nonconformist writers in the mid seventeenth century such as William Kiffin, John Lilburne, and William Walwyn, thus reinterprets the dialectical relationship between the earthly and heavenly cities in the Augustinian and Lutheran traditions. The heavenly city is a regulative ideal toward which not only the individual soul, but also the political community, must move through the actions of virtuous people. She puts responsibility for creating a just society on decentralized individual action. The state exists to serve the pursuit of justice rather than to confine or control it. Like the Presbyterians, Chidley understood the small community as the most effective means of cultivating virtuous citizens through education and discipline but she departs from them in her essentially liberal vision of the relationship between church and state. As William Kiffin argued, religious faith must be voluntary, “Our subjection to Christ and his lawes must be free, that is, it must be raised within us from the consideration of that excellency that is in Christ and his lawes” (1642: 13-14).¹³⁷ Religious subjection motivated by one’s “own by-ends and respects,” is a perversion of faith. Religion, as the source of virtue and truth, must stand outside of the coercive capacity of the state in order to hold the state accountable to the collective good.

Some, like the millenialist Fifth Monarchists, Mary Cary and Vavasor Powell, envision the heavenly city as an achievable state rather than merely as inspiration for progressive reform. They imagined that the reign of Christ on earth was imminent and would be manifest through the actions of believers. They are similar to Chidley in their ascription of political change to popular agency, but where she argues for limited

¹³⁷ Kiffin, William. *Certain Observations upon Hosea The Second*. London (1642). Wing (2nd ed.) / K423A. Bodleian Library.

monarchical power and self-determining communities, the Fifth Monarchists anticipate radical social and political upheaval that will instantiate a new hierarchy based on righteousness rather than wealth and birth.¹³⁸

Before 1641 there are few examples of non-conformist thought in print, and virtually none published in England. However, a tradition of reading and writing as an important part of religious practice within the “gathered churches” is evident in the pamphlets and tracts that were published in the 1640s when censorship relaxed. The immediacy with which people made use of print to propagate their own ideas and republish those of sixteenth century dissenters such as Thomas Cartwright and John Ponet also suggests that the vibrancy of nonconformist political ideas was not born of print. Rather, ideas that had long been nourished within these communities found expression in print once barriers to publication were removed.

Private circulation of spiritual autobiographies and diaries was one way in which print culture was an important part of communal life. Their impact is evident on both the form of expression and on the conceptualization of the individual in relation to public life in many later public interventions. Conversion stories provided evidence of the movement of God in the world and the transformative power of belief. Stories of overcoming illness and depression were shared to demonstrate that God was an active force in the world working directly through people. Kilby’s *Burthen of a Loaden Conscience* (1612),¹³⁹ for example, which in some respects was a prototype for the genre,

¹³⁸ See Bernard Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men: Study in Seventeenth Century English Millenarianism* (1972).

¹³⁹ Kilby, Richard. *The burthen of a loaden conscience: or The miserie of sinne set forth by the confession of a miserable sinner*. STC (2nd ed.) / 14950.5. Union Theological Seminary. This pamphlet was reprinted numerous times during the 1630s.

presented the individual as a microcosm of the larger political community. The suffering and redemption through insight dramatized in individual conversion experiences indicated the consequences of godlessness of the larger community, its potential to overcome collective suffering and the path to reform.¹⁴⁰

Individual spiritual development became a source of authority in critiques of political power and admonishments for spiritual and social reform. For women in particular, but also for common people more generally, piety substituted for education or class as justification for political voice. The meek were to inherit the earth and their voices in public debate were a sign that political change was imminent. Challenging the corrupt exercise of power was construed in their speech as a duty to God, an obligation that trumped obedience to civil authorities. In the wake of the civil wars the body frequently figured as a metaphor for the damaged political body in prophetic speech. Because of the centrality of writing, speaking and preaching to the historical mission of believers to transform society by shepherding in God's truth defense of these practices as 'birthright liberties and freedoms' became linked to arguments for toleration.

From the late Elizabethan period through James I's reign the separatist church communities were generally considered disruptive to social order. Along with Catholics they were regarded as fundamentally subversive for implicitly or explicitly endorsing doctrines that challenged monarchical authority. Under James there was a general distinction between separatist communities, who rejected the purview of the state in religious matters altogether, and Protestants who welcomed the state church but sought

¹⁴⁰ See Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative* (2005); Watkins, Owen, *The Puritan Experience* (1972) and Webster, Tom. "Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality," (1996).

reform of its papist elements or the freedom to depart from the *Book of Common Prayer* according to their own consciences. The former group was regarded as a threat to political stability while the latter group was largely tolerated in practice despite their violation of the Canons of 1604.

During the reign of Charles I, however, Archbishop Laud instituted a new campaign of uniformity that changed the nature of the toleration debates. As practices and doctrines that had been accepted or quietly ignored were declared heretical, people who regarded themselves as loyal subjects of the throne and members of the Church of England faced persecution that had previously been reserved for ‘seditious’, ‘treasonous’ separatists. Both the power of the state to dictate conscience and the practices it employed to enforce uniformity came under public criticism. Advocates of local church government who rejected the ecclesiastical hierarchy and ceremony as redolent of papism increasingly used parliament to challenge monarchical control over religion.

Charles I and Archbishop Laud

Charles I was regarded with suspicion by Puritan-minded Protestants for a variety of reasons. His marriage to the Catholic, Henrietta, of France and appointment of the Duke of Buckingham, whom they suspected of helping the French king suppress the (Protestant) Huguenots, as his chief minister stoked fears that he leaned a bit too far toward the Romish religion. His requirement of strict enforcement of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (1563) and the *Book of Common Prayer* were further interpreted as hostile to the Puritan reform mission, if not outright papist. Charles’s program of religious uniformity was clearly at odds with the Protestant identity many people

understood as defining their English nation. Many also argued that his actions were a violation of the “birthright liberties,” guaranteed by their divinely ordained, and historically evident constitution.

Much as the Whitgift campaign had threatened locally defined communities by dispossessing ministers who refused to comply with standard religious practices, Archbishop William Laud’s crackdown on nonconformity galvanized resistance within church communities and led many who had been willing members of the state church to question the authority of the monarch in religious matters. Some thought this control properly lay with Parliament. They understood the English state as a mixed monarchy and saw Parliament as the true voice of the people through whom God’s will was revealed. Others questioned the control of the church by the state altogether.

Laud’s campaign to root out nonconformists began in earnest in 1636. His efforts did not involve significant legal innovation, but consisted merely of prosecution of existing laws to rid the church of persistent pluralism in practice and doctrine. He ordered the enforcement of laws criminalizing refusal to attend church on Sundays, meeting in private houses and maintaining private conventicles, as well as any practices designated as “corrupting and perverting of sundrie his Ma[jes]ties good subjects and the manifest contempt of his Highnes lawes, and the disturbance of the peace of the Church.”¹⁴¹ Local magistrates were authorized by the crown to invade people’s residences, search and arrest suspected deviants:

taking with you a high or pettie Constable, and such other convenient assistance as you shall thinck meet, you doe enter into anie house or place where you shall have intelligence or probably suspect that any such privat Conventicles or meetings are held kept, and frequented by anie such sectaries or schismatiques, and therein and

¹⁴¹ Woolley (1965) p. 26.

everie roome thereof you doe make diligent search for them, as [als]o for all unlawfull and unlicenced bookes, and seditious and unlawfull writings and papers.¹⁴²

The people, books and writings seized in such invasions were brought before the king's commissioners to be examined. The books were burned; their owners or authors arrested or put to death. Torture and disfigurement were common punishments. John Lilburne, who would later become a Leveller leader, was flogged as he was dragged through the streets by his hands behind an ox cart after being arrested for distributing unlicensed religious publications. William Prynne, John Bastwick and Henry Burton, outspoken advocates of presbyterian church government, had their ears cropped and "SL" carved on their faces in punishment for seditious libel.

It is impossible within the bounds of this discussion to do justice to the extensive historiographical debates about the causes of the English Civil Wars and the complex role religion played in their unfolding. Religion was clearly a point of division between the Parliament and the monarchy. Charles I's association with Catholicism and extension of persecutory practices were critical to successful mobilization against him. In addition to providing the organization, discipline and zeal necessary to mount an army and sustain resistance (Walzer 1974, Manning 1973) religion provided a common interest that unified people within England against Charles I's actual and feared religious repression and between England and Scotland as the Scottish rebelled against Charles' imposition of episcopacy on their Presbyterian church. A shared Protestant identity and religious language were important factors in energizing the English population against the king.

¹⁴² Search warrant issued to John Wragg in 1636 to root out heretics in an around London. Reprinted in "Baptists in the State Papers," *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, April 1917, pp. 150-52.

They facilitated the construction of a common interest among Presbyterians, republicans who sought a clearly established governing role for Parliament and religious radicals who saw themselves as fulfilling God's mission by transforming society.

A new sense of personal relevance to national politics is evident in the language of appeal and actions of common people during the civil war period. Arguments for liberty of conscience became entwined with justifications for deposing the monarch in the 1640s and early 1650s. In the midst of political upheaval, advocates of religious liberty and people defending themselves in the face of religious oppression grounded their claims upon divine will and the ancient constitution. In many cases God was both incentive and shield as people challenged existing authorities. Radical reformers justified their challenges to power on the basis of spiritual equality and responsibility. They were fulfilling their duty to God in condemning the king for ruling in his own interest rather than for the well being of the commonwealth. Encroachment upon religious liberty was one of the central crimes of Charles I's regime from the point of view of nonconformists who sought separation of church and state. For Presbyterians, however, his error was in threatening the true religion.

From 1641 there was an dramatic increase in the intensity and pace of the public debate regarding religious toleration. The break down in censorship gave people from all walks of life access to print, and during the turbulent decades of the civil wars and Interregnum over 20,000 works were published. As the foundation of political legitimacy and the primary institution through which the monarchy projected power to the local level, religion was central to the discourses that challenged the king and through which political order was re-established in the wake of the regicide. Public arguments are

presented through lengthy and elaborate treatises that draw heavily upon scripture and a variety of historical sources, as well as through petitions, letters, parodic and often bawdy caricatures, preaching, and prophecy.

Anglicans were opposed to toleration on the grounds that a common religious practice was essential to sustain political order and was justified by tradition, experience and 'right reason'. Anxiety about the proliferation of religious sects is clearly evident in their arguments. The sects challenged centralized political authority and endorsed doctrines that absolved people of the duty to obey civil magistrates altogether. Anglicans increasingly objected to Presbyterians less for their subversive potential than for fear that decentralization of religion would popularize discipline. They argued that Presbyterians were overwrought moralists who sought to impose their views on the rest of society. The Anglican narrative supported the status quo: a state church governed by an absolute monarch and justified by tradition. Presbyterians, on the other hand sought a comprehensive but decentralized state church that was fully purged of papist ritual. They were intolerant of separatists and fully endorsed the use of civil power to enforce the true religion. The separatist sects in most cases desired a full separation of church and state. Like the Presbyterians they understood piety as the source of political obedience but they regarded efforts to compel or control it as futile and ultimately an impediment to the manifestation of God's will in the world.

This specific encampment of views on toleration developed in response to Charles I's efforts to finish the project of creating a centrally administered, religiously homogenous polity. Puritans used Parliament to challenge his ambitions from the beginning of his reign, and much of the turbulent history between Parliament and Charles

I, which culminated in his execution, was centered around the question of religious authority. In 1628 Parliament formed a committee of grievances in response to what the Puritan dominated membership considered regressive ‘papist’ measures, such as enforcement of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the use of the surplice. Parliament presented Charles with a “Petition of Right” (1628) affirming the “inherited freedom” of Englishmen from coercive taxation and arbitrary imprisonment, dispossession or exile. The document affirmed the supremacy of the law and the historical continuity of certain fundamental liberties of Englishmen. In accordance with England’s ‘ancient constitution’ the monarch’s actions were constrained by Parliament and legal procedures designed to protect the property and bodies of citizens from arbitrary incursion. Charles reluctantly signed the petition because he needed money for wars with Spain and France. However in the face of subsequent challenges to his control over taxation and religion Charles dismissed Parliament in March 1629 with the expressed intention to “maintain the true religion and doctrine established in the Church of England, without admitting or conniving any backsliding wither to popery or schism.”¹⁴³ He further pledged to “maintain the ancient and just rights and liberties of our subjects, with so much constancy and justice that they shall have cause to acknowledge that under our government and gracious protection they live in a more happy and free estate than any subjects in the Christian world.”

But liberties in Charles’ lexicon clearly differed from the liberties the petitioners understood themselves to be defending. While the parliamentarians regarded local representation and regulation to be the source of political authority and the proper basis

¹⁴³ Charles I, “Defense of the Dissolution of Parliament” (March 1629). James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History* (1906) p. 224.

for religious regulation, Charles understood religious and political authority to proceed from the monarchy, a singular power to which those receiving liberties owed complete obedience. The authors of the Petition of Right understood liberty to be an inviolable bulwark against arbitrary government and unlawful encroachment by political authority upon the well being of citizens. For Charles I, however, liberties were maintained by the monarch under conditions of obedience. Much like Thomas Hobbes, Charles I declared that complete obedience was owed to the monarchy in exchange for its maintenance of the commonwealth in peace. Ancient liberties were a tradition of English government, a way of doing things within a frame of absolute obligation. They did not have an ontological status outside of the frame of political authority through which the manner and effectiveness of government could be contested.

For Puritans within the Church of England as well as for many of the Independent sects, divinity, rather than tradition, was the ultimate source of political authority. The English constitution was part of the divine gift of government for the realization of God's purpose on earth – the cultivation of a devout society. Liberties were among the tools for realizing this divine mission. As Charles' reign was increasingly seen as an assault upon the reform mission of the 'true' religion, the resistance narratives of early protestants such as John Ponet, Christopher Goodman and Thomas Cartwright were employed to articulate the responsibility of godly citizens. Presbyterians had always represented the interests of local communities against centralization of religious authority and practice but they regarded themselves as full members of the English church. They did not embrace the subversive potential of their doctrine that God's truth was knowable and the ultimate guide to social and political life until Laud's policies turned the persecutory

power of the state on them as well.

The next chapter presents the developments in the toleration debates from the English Revolution through the Restoration. It considers the consequences of developing political unity through a common religious narrative: When the monarch is perceived as a threat to that narrative he becomes vulnerable to assault from multiple positions. Charles I inherited a throne legitimized by Protestantism and absolute monarchy. The Protestant collective identity was effective as a unifying narrative of membership, but it also created significant tension between the existing diversity of community level religious practice and efforts to control and standardize practice from the top. Charles' policies under Laud represent another campaign for uniformity to bring the English church fully within the control of the monarchy. They incited rebellion as previous campaigns had, but this time among a broader coalition of interests. Charles I's effort to aggrandize the monarchy, however sincere the religious convictions that lay behind it, intruded upon the established practices of Puritans within the Church of England. Threatened with the reimposition of popery, they enacted their godly duty to protect the realm.

The campaign for religious uniformity also incited opposition to what many people regarded as an illegitimate use of civil power. The arbitrary arrest, dispossession, imprisonment, banishment and restraint of speech in the name of conformity led people to challenge not merely the particular form of the state-church, but the power of the king to impose upon the consciences of English people at all. As the debates demonstrate, between 1640 and 1689 the concept of the state and the distribution of power within it are reframed to accommodate England's apparently irrepressible diversity of religious practice, and preserve the Protestant identity shared by the majority of English people.

Fear of Roman Catholicism and the experiences of fellow protestants in France ultimately contribute to a consensus that the unrestrained power of the monarchy is a greater threat to the Protestant English nation than popular empowerment in religious matters.

Chapter Five: The Revolutionary Years (1640-1660)

Religious narratives were critical to the reconceptualization of political authority during the English Revolution and Interregnum. Religion was a primary motivation in cross-class resistance to the king, and a critical factor in reconstituting political power. This period was characterized by a high degree of popular engagement with politics and radical upheaval of traditional roles. Political allegiances in the name of religious liberty break up in the face of opportunities for certain groups to institute their particular vision of the correct religion. Divine narratives provided the resources for pointed political critiques of social and political inequality, governmental corruption and the responsibilities of common people to bring about a just society. The problems of revelation as the basis of political legitimacy and the limits of 'truth' as a basis for collective life promote a discourse of the commonwealth as a frame for religious experience rather than an arbiter of beliefs.

During the 1640s there was a tremendous increase in public debate regarding the relationship between church and state. Toleration advocates, most of whom came from the ranks of the Independent sects, frequently argued for full separation of religious and civil authority, and liberty of conscience is often associated with political freedom generally in arguments on both sides of the issue. The ideas generated through public debate in the 1640s and 1650s anticipate – and arguably inform – the ideas about the role of citizens in political life, as well as the purpose and structure of government that are traditionally identified as the origins of liberal political thought. The period was characterized by increasing prominence of national level politics and unprecedented levels of participation in political life by ordinary people.

Since at least the beginning of James I's reign, Puritans had pursued reform of the Church of England through Parliament. A church determined by Parliament rather than by the single authority of the monarchy may have been more in harmony with the theory of church and state that informed Presbyterian objections to the state church, but ultimately Presbyterians appear more concerned with which religion was implemented

than with the structure of government from which it originated. Presbyterians favored local autonomy within an established state. Their early justifications for this structure of church governance were promotion of social reform and purging of papal elements from church practices and community beliefs. The idea of England as a republican monarchy, in which the counselors played an important guiding role in the execution of a government that drew its authority from the people, was consonant with their understanding of scripture and revelation as the definitive resources for government. Ministers were an elite cadre of interpreters with a responsibility to establish a moral center within their church communities. The centralized church and its papal vestiges undermined the effectiveness of this form of community leadership.

As Charles enacted policies that appeared reactionary in the context of the previous acceptance of Presbyterian ministers within the Church of England, Presbyterians again turned to Parliament in effort to restrain Charles from reinstituting popery. Presbyterians and Independents had a shared interest in stopping the religious persecution of which they were the primary target. These groups also found common cause with advocates of mixed government or government by a representative assembly, although there was considerable overlap between these political commitments and religious nonconformity.

When the Bishops War in Scotland forced Charles I to call Parliament to session in 1640 the Puritans in Parliament took measures to reverse the persecutory policies implemented during their exclusion from government. The “Long Parliament,”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ The Long Parliament was so named because it remained in session until after the Interregnum in 1660. To prevent Charles I from excluding Parliament again, as he did from 1629 to 1640, Parliament passed the *Triennial Act*, which required that Parliament

impeached Archbishop Laud and released those who were imprisoned by the Star Chamber for nonconformity. Parliament appointed the Westminster Assembly of Divines to restructure the Church of England. The commission was comprised of 121 clergy of a variety of theological orientations, and thirty laymen, twenty of whom were commoners. Anglicans largely refused to participate because Charles I forbade the meeting and threatened harsh retaliation against those who attended.¹⁴⁵ The Assembly convened over one thousand times between 1643 and 1649 and generated a considerable body of letters, pamphlets and petitions on the subject of religious toleration.¹⁴⁶

meet at least every three years, and the *Act against Dissolving the Long Parliament without its own Consent*, both in 1641. Parliament was purged by the New Model Army in 1649 and the remaining members, known as the Rump Parliament, were replaced during Cromwell's Protectorate. Legally however, the original Parliament was still in session because it had not dissolved itself. In 1658 the Rump Parliament was recalled to bolster the legitimacy of the Army's rule after the coup against Cromwell's son but it was also dissolved due to conflict with the army. In 1660 the original members of the Long Parliament were resealed so that they could dissolve themselves to make way for the Restoration.

¹⁴⁵ Charles I refused to sign the bill five times. The Assembly of Divines was ultimately passed as an ordinance of the House of Commons that became law without the king when it was approved by the House of Lords in 1643.

¹⁴⁶ For a comprehensive history of the Westminster Assembly of Divines see Hetherington, William Maxwell. *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*. New York: Mark Newman, 1843. According to Hetherington the mandate of the assembly was to figure out, "On what terms could a National Church be constituted, so as neither to encroach upon civil liberty, as the Papal and Prelatic churches had done, not to yield up those inherent spiritual rights, privileges, and liberties, which are essential to a church of Christ" (p. 100). The state (as Parliament) could have presented the terms on which it would establish a national church, or the church (as the Divines and several laymen) could have asserted the terms on which it would consent to be established. Parliament required matters to be deliberated for at least one day, claims of necessity to be legitimated by scripture.

***The Assembly of Divines: Persecution is thy name, Perfect Reformation*¹⁴⁷**

The petitions to the Assembly of Divines illustrate the range of issues raised within the toleration debates: Was religious homogeneity necessary for political stability and peace? In the absence of a unified disciplinary doctrine and practice what would constrain licentiousness? How could a collective ideal be established or preserved if it were not compulsory given the inherently corrupt and self-oriented nature of human beings? How much difference of opinion (if any) in matters of faith could be tolerated without destruction to the English nation? If religious homogeneity is critical to the political constitution, how might it be established and arbitrated within the limits of the Protestant faith? At what point does the state church subordinate the divine to civil authority in a way that contravenes its own justification? What is the objective of coercion of conscience and how well is it actually realized? All of these questions, which are engaged to some degree in arguments for and against toleration, are informed by and push the development of theories of the nature and purpose of the political and religious communities and the proper role of the individual within them. With some exceptions the debates are political, and often polemical, rather than philosophical in character. Many are concerned with refuting the common arguments of their ideological opponents through whatever means necessary, and employ multiple strategies to justify their own positions.

Presbyterians, despite their experience with persecution under Laud, were generally not prepared to tolerate religious independency. They endorsed the idea of a

¹⁴⁷ *Proper Persecution, or the Sandy Foundation of a general Toleration, Discovered and Portrayed in its proper Colors*. Richard Overton (1646). Thomason / 669.f.10[104]. Published anonymously.

state church, and in fact saw it as critical to political stability, much like the Anglicans with whom they disagreed primarily on the nature of church government. They sought a federated church structure that maximized local autonomy, where discipline and religious persuasion could best respond to community needs. They had long advocated scripture and spirit, rather than tradition as the guide to religious practice, particularly where tradition meant the continuation of Papism. Yet by the 1640s Presbyterians began to employ the justifications for intolerance the Anglicans had used against them in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Tradition could now justify the continuity of Presbyterians' several generations of practice within the Church of England. Recent protestant history was also a source of knowledge about the proper arrangement of church and state. The broad category "presbyterian" at the beginning of the seventeenth century implied merely the preference for autonomous congregations within a national church. By 1640s however, Presbyterians were associated with the preference for a national church government comprised of a hierarchy of elders, while "Independents" or "Congregationalists" wanted united but legally independent churches that were not governed by a higher authority.

A petition to the Assembly from 73 ministers from Colchester (1645) is typical of Presbyterian anti-toleration arguments. Experience and "right reason" have demonstrated that toleration of independency is

the Mother of Contention, the Root of Schism, the Back-door to Heresie, the Nullity of Church-government, the plain Breach of Covenant of God and Man, the very undoing of our several Congregations and Ministeries, destructive to the peace and union of the Kingdoms, and full of Scandal, if not dangerous to other Reformed Churches.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Thomason / 669.f.10[42]

The arguments against the Presbyterians from the beginning of the seventeenth century – that they would sow division and foster insurrection through their doctrine despite their intentions – are here turned against independency and separation. Presbyterians feared the loss of disciplinary control within communities. They wanted autonomy at the community level, but not at the individual level. Well established boundaries of authority and the conceptual centrality of the national church were critical to the religious mission of the nation. The state, in their view, ultimately served the church in promoting a sober society within which godliness could develop.

The London ministers offered their own reasons against toleration in a letter to the Assembly (1645) that generated several supporting and counter arguments.¹⁴⁹ They argued that peace was only durable if it was built on righteousness and truth. The church could contain differences of opinion but it could not sacrifice its unity. Separate conventicles were thus intolerable. They blame separatist ministers and congregations for rejecting the affection and love of their “brethren,” willfully destroying the organic unity of the church. Reformation of the church was not yet perfected, and allowing the proliferation of faith communities would undermine this critical task. They shared the premise of many nonconforming sects that truth is emergent in society, but disagreed that liberty of conscience is the proper way to bring it about. Rather, purging the church of

¹⁴⁹ There are letters supporting the London ministers in their stance “against the heresies and blasphemies of these times and the toleration of them” from the ministers of Cheshire (1648), Wiltes (1648), Gloucester-shire (1648), Warwickshire (1648), and Essex (1648) as well as *The Hearty Concurrence of divers Citizens and Inhabitants of the City of London; with the Ministers within the Province thereof, to their Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ, and to our Solemn League and Covenant* (1648). Thomason / 669.f.12[8].

heresy and idolatrous practice would shepherd God's truth into society.¹⁵⁰

Advocates of toleration accused Presbyterians of enacting the persecution that had been imposed upon them by the Bishops (Anglicans) and on the Bishops by the Pope. The Presbyters had once shared the plight of the Independents, but now that they were released from their own bonds of religious oppression they have no sympathy for those who only wish to live in accordance with their consciences:

It is a wonder to me, that now that yoke is removed, and a blest opportunity offered by Almighty God, to the people and their Parliament, to make every honest heart glad, by allowing a just and contentfull Freedome, to serve God without hypocrise; and according to the perswasion of conscience: That one sect among us, that is the Presbyters, that have been yoke-fellows with us; should not rest satisfied with being free as their Brethren, but become restlesse in their contrivances and endeavors, till they become Lords over us (A2).¹⁵¹

The author presents the Presbyterians' abuse of their power and insensitivity to their own history as akin to the Israelites (hypothetically) becoming task masters over another group after being freed from bondage in Canaan. Having thrown off the tyranny of the king they were assuming the role of oppressor. Furthermore, in seeking to control people's consciences the Presbyterians were exhibiting the same venality that the Bishops had with respect to the king – only their instrument was Parliament:

...the Presbyters have laboured to twist their interest with the Parliaments, as the Bishops did theirs with the King, how daily and burdensomly importunate they are with the Parliament, to establish their government (which they call Christs) and back it with authority and a compulsive power (1645:2).

Their purported concern with truth was disingenuous; what they really sought was

¹⁵⁰ *A Letter of the Ministers of the City of London, Presented the first of Jan. 1645. To the Reverend Assembly of Divines Sitting at Westminster by Authority of Parliament, Against Toleration.* London 1645. Thomason / E.314[8].

¹⁵¹ Anon. *The Letter of the London Ministers to the Assembly of Divines at Westminster; against Toleration, mildly examined; and The mistakes thereof friendly discovered; As well for the sakes of the Independent and Separation, as for the good of the Commonwealth.* (1645). Thomason / E.314[8]

political control. Rendering religion a tool of that pursuit was proof of their corruption just as the state church had been of the monarch's. Interestingly, the Independents had no blame for Parliament; rather it was the Presbyterians who were tyrants in seeking to control it.

Richard Overton published a series of pamphlets in which he condemned the greed and persecutory practices of the Presbyterians and Bishops alike with satire, images and a cast of characters who represented the various factions contending for religious control of the country. The pamphlets invoke Martin Marprelate, a centerpiece of republican challenges to religious uniformity (and defender of Presbyterians against the bishops) during the latter half of Elizabeth's reign by beginning with "Martin's eccho". "Sir John Presbyter" and his father, "Sir Simon Synod," reproduce the oppressive practices of the Roman church and the Anglicans as they struggle for financial and ideological supremacy. "Honest harts" meanwhile are left to "suffering and extremity" in the hands of the pope, a bishop and a "profane libertin" united in their zeal to persecute, as one pamphlet represented the fate of religious independents.¹⁵² If the Presbyterians had as much power as Queen Mary, Overton declares, their 'reformation' would end with "fire and faggot". Independents who threw their lot with the Presbters to escape persecution by the bishops found the same treatment, "to shun the smoak, [they] have lept into the fire." Overton caricatured Presbyterian moralism and austerity and lamented the popularizing of discipline and judgment, "the same power which was lately resident in an

¹⁵² *Proper Persecution, or the Sandy Foundation of a general Toleration, Discovered and Portrayed in its proper Colors*. Richard Overton (1646). Thomason / 669.f.10[104]. Published anonymously.

Archbishop, is inherent and of divine right in every presbyter.”¹⁵³ The pamphlet bears an image of an English bishop on his hands and knees with a bridle in his mouth while a presbyter rides him bearing a whip. The bishop is equipped with spurs and a bible that are useless now that the Presbyterians have “locked up [the Protestant Religion] in the breast of the Assembly.” Presbyterians and Anglicans are ultimately alike in their greed and persecution. Like many of the objections to the London ministers’ position that toleration would give rise to heresy, the pamphlet argues that heresies are constructed by those who have the power to declare and enforce truth.

The London ministers and many who write in support of them construe toleration as a threat to the power of magistrates: “When men shake off Truth, they wil shake off Magistracy.”¹⁵⁴ The Independents are deemed untrustworthy of toleration because they are secretive about their practices and beliefs; their ideas about governance are unknown and thus potentially dangerous. The Presbyterians suggest that when the sects are more institutionalized, “once they are positively determined how farre they meane to goe, and where they mean to stay” it might be possible to tolerate them (3).¹⁵⁵ Of course if they are not tolerated they won’t be able to institutionalize, nor will they be able to be transparent about their ideas regarding government without risk of persecution. Ultimately, however, the Presbyterian concern, like that of the bishops, is that diversity of religious practice would undermine the political and social structure. Much like the bishops at the end of

¹⁵³ *Reall Persecution, or the Foundation of a general Toleration, Displaied and Portrayed by a proper Emblem, and adorned with the same Flowers wherewith the Scoffers of this last age have strowed their Libellous Pamphlets*. London (1647). Harvard University Library, Wing / R457A.

¹⁵⁴ *Arguments for Toleration; Publish’d for the satisfaction of all Moderate Men*. (1647). Thomason / E.402[17]. Despite the title it is an anti-toleration argument.

¹⁵⁵ *A Letter of the Ministers of the City of London* (1645). Thomason / E.314[8].

the sixteenth century, the Presbyterians resort to reason and tradition to justify religious homogeneity – no reformed Church had effectively allowed toleration, and the singular Christian church had been a unifying political force within England and among the three kingdoms (England, Scotland and Ireland). For them political control was a means of realizing long sought reforms of the national church. The reform mission provided a common purpose and identity that were necessary for political stability, but more importantly political stability was critical to manifesting the true church:

We cannot dissemble how upon the forementioned grounds, wee detest and abhorre the much endeavoured Toleration: Our bowels, our bowels are stirred within us, and we could even drown ourselves in teares, when we call to minde how long and sharp a travel this Kingdome hath been in for many yeares together to bring forth that blessed fruit of a pure and perfect Reformation, and now at last after all our pangs and dolors and expectations, this reall and thorough Reformation, is in danger of being strangled in the birth by a lawlesse Toleration that strives to be brought forth before it (6).

Presbyterian minister Thomas Edwards elaborates the dangers of religious independency to the “Christian Commonwealth” of England in his tract (1641), *Reasons against the independent government of particular congregations as also against toleration of such churches to be erected in this kingdome* (which provoked Katherine Chidley’s argument for separation of church and state) and in his more well-known heresiography, *Gangraena* (1646).¹⁵⁶ Edwards declares that toleration will undermine the foundation of the “Christian Commonwealth” by challenging the legitimacy of political

¹⁵⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of the book and its impact on political culture during the English revolution see Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution*. Oxford University Press 2004 and “‘Popular’ Presbyterianism in the 1640s and 1650s: the case of Thomas Edwards and Thomas Hall,” also by Hughes in Tyacke, Nicholas (ed.) *England’s Long Reformation, 1500-1800* (1998: 248). *Gangraena* is alarmist in its tone and met criticism from at least 30 of Edward’s contemporaries for being exaggerated and mean spirited. John Lilburne, William Walwyn and John Goodwin were among the respondents.

authority and sowing division among families and communities. The authority of church leaders was derived from their link to the practices of early Christianity. Officers in the church had to be “lawfully called” through ordination, which preserved the institutional and doctrinal coherence of the church. The legitimacy of ordination, like that of the monarchy, was established through a lineage of divinely sanctioned leaders directly transmitting their authority to one another. Unmooring this power to vest leaders with authority from its historical anchor in “the church” would have undercut the very foundations of political legitimacy in historical precedent. If communities were allowed to choose their own leaders without authorization by the church there would be no bounds on their behavior and nothing to preserve political life from individual caprice. *Gangraena* elaborates the perils of this autonomy with fantastical descriptions of the degenerate practices of independent sects. As the title suggests Edwards saw their heresies as a source of a progressive decay that would eventually destroy the commonwealth.

Edwards stokes fears that toleration would undermine male social privilege, a common trope in anti-toleration arguments. If diverse practices and beliefs were accepted men would lose their God-ordained control over their households. Families were the “seminaries and nurseries” for both churches and commonwealths; anything that compromised them was a recipe for disorder:

O how will this toleration take away (for every Saint must bee free to joyne himselfe voluntarily to what congregation he please) that power, authority which God hath given the husbands, fathers and masters, over wives, children, servants; whilst that they shall joyne against their wills to such Churches, and be stolen from them against their pleasure...this toleration will pervert, disturbe, that Order of Gods owne appointing, namely the relations, duties and works of families. (27)

Toleration advocates countered these claims that independency sowed moral depravity

and undermined paternal authority with declarations of the virtuous and public-spirited nature of independents and nonconformists. Some argue that a persecuting spirit is a far greater threat to the commonwealth and is *least* deserving of toleration by the state:

Of all sects of men, those deserve the least countenance of a State that would be Persecutors, not because of their consciences in the practice and exercise of their Religion, wherein the ground of Freedome consists, but because a persecuting spirit is the greatest enemy to humane society, the dissolver of love and brotherly affection, the cause of envyings, heart-burnings, divisions, yes, and of warres itself (7).¹⁵⁷

Past strife and social divisions came about not because of popular differences in religious practice but because of “the Tyranny of Princes, and Persecution of Priests” (7).

Competition and “heart-burnings” among people are a consequence of preferential treatment of certain groups by the state, rather than due to people’s inherent combativeness.

The Independent communities described themselves as filled with love and harmony, a quality inspired in them by God that rendered them capable of self-discipline. They continually call upon the Presbyterians to meet them as “brethren.” Walwyn in particular appealed for toleration in the spirit of love and compassion. He responded to Edwards’ vituperative charges with a dialogue in which four doctors named Love, Justice, Patience and Truth consult with Edwards about his spiritual distortion while the observers Conscience, Hope, Piety, Superstition and Policie look on. He characterized Edwards as in need of this medical attention because “it cannot proceed from true Religion rightly understood, to beget malancholly, moody, angry, frampoll¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Walwyn, William. *Toleration Justified and Persecution Condemned* (1646). Accessed through http://www.constitution.org/lev/eng_lev_02.htm on 06/01/09.

¹⁵⁸ ill-tempered

Imaginations, for that rightly understood begets cheerfulness of spirit.”¹⁵⁹ Chidley, also understood faith as conferring a sociable spirit. The divine was both a distant architect of political relations and the source of social order within individuals. Social engagement imposed clear limits on both the behavior and truth claims individuals could make within a political community, but these restrictions were within bounds that religious people might establish for themselves. Godly people, she argued, do not seek tolerance of licentious behavior and they willingly accept the jurisdiction of the law within its proper domain. Differences among people’s beliefs could be settled through a deliberative process that was proper to the political realm.¹⁶⁰

Tolerance and Intolerance as Reason of State

Many Independents emphasized the state’s role as an arbiter of public conflict rather than as the judge of truth in arguments for full separation of church and state. As the decade progressed the discourse of toleration questioned the effectiveness of orthodoxy in achieving its purported goals and the state was increasingly conceptualized in terms of securing relations between people rather than as the custodian of individual souls. In *Toleration Justified and Persecution Condemned*, Walwyn presents this more limited view of the power of the state, “It cannot be just to set bounds or limitations to toleration any further than the safety of the people” (1646:8). As he had argued two years

¹⁵⁹ Walwyn, William, *A parable, or consultation of physitians vpon Master Edwards. Love. Justice. Patience. Truth. [brace] Doctors. [brace] Conscience. Hope. Piety. Superstition. Policie. [brace] Observers*. London 1646, p. A3. Thomason / E.359[8]

¹⁶⁰ Katherine Chidley, *A new-yeares-gift, or A brief exhortation to Mr. Thomas Edwards; that he may breake off his old sins, in the old yeare, and begin the new yeare, with new fruits of love, first to God, and then to his brethren.*, London (1645). Thomason / E.23[13]

earlier in *The Compassionate Samaritan*¹⁶¹ (1644) matters of conscience fell outside the purview of the state because conscience could not be forced. Coercion of beliefs, rather than the beliefs themselves, was destructive to the polity. Parliament was justified in restraining material that was “scandalous or dangerous to the state” but not in stopping “the mouthes of good men.” Blasphemy and horrid opinions would take care of themselves if people were allowed to debate their opinions in public without fear of reprisal.

Gross error, Walwyn and others argued, was easy to expose and remedy if it were not strengthened in secrecy and with persecution. As another letter argued, the coercive power of the state was ineffective in eliminating heresy: “If truth may be suffered also it will prevail against Errours. It is no more in their power to hinder Errours, then it was in the power of the Prelates to hinder men’s preaching, writing and speaking against them.”¹⁶² Henry Robinson emphasizes the importance of public communication to the revelation of truth in his argument that civil magistrates should have no power of compulsion over conscience: “It were better that many false doctrines were published, especially with a good intention and out of weakness only, then that one sound truth should be forcibly smothered or willfully concealed; and by the incongruities and absurdities which accompany erroneous and unsound doctrines, the truth appears still

¹⁶¹ *The compassionate Samaritane unbinding the conscience, and powring oyle into the wounds which have beene made upon the separation recommending their future welfare to the serious thoughts and carefull endeavors of all who love the peace and unity of common wealths men.* Henry E. Huntington Library.

¹⁶² *Fifty Questions Propounded to the Assembly, to answer by the Scriptures: whether corporall punishments may be inflicted upon such as hold different opinions in Religion* (1647). Thomason / E.388[11]. British Library.

more glorious, and wins others to the love thereof.”¹⁶³

While Presbyterians employed the idea of ‘truth’ as justification for civil control of religious practice and discourse, religious dissenters employed the same premise to redefine the state’s role in terms of the conditions through which truth might emerge. The truth required not only freedom of conscience but freedom of the press, speech and association as well.¹⁶⁴ Speaking and reading were essential to religious liberty because they fostered the judgment and understanding through which an individual was capable of discerning the truth. The conversion of conscience to the “true religion,” valued by Presbyterians and dissenters alike, was only meaningful if it was characterized by sincere understanding. Thus coercion and religious persecution undermined the very purpose toward which they were directed. Milton’s *Aeropagitica* and *Eikonoklastes* demonstrate both the idea that popular access to print without licensing was an essential liberty, and that the cultivation of the ‘true religion’ it fostered – rather than spiritual paternalism – was critical to national well-being:

It were a nation miserable indeed, not worth the name of a nation, but a race of idiots, whose happiness and welfare depended on one man [the King]. The happiness of a nation consists in true religion, piety, justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude and the contempt of avarice and ambition. They in whomsoever these virtues dwell eminently, need not kings to make them happy, but are the architects

¹⁶³ Robinson, Henry. *Liberty of Conscience: or The sole means to obtaine peace and truth. Not onely reconciling His Majesty with His subjects, but all Christian states and princes to one another, with the freest passage for the gospel. Very seasonable and necessary in these distracted times, when most men are weary of war, and cannot finde the way to peace.* March, 1644. Thomason / E.9[13]. British Library.

¹⁶⁴ John Lilburne, for example, in *Englands Birthright Justified* (1645) attacked “that insufferable, unjust and tyrannical Monopoly of Printing,” alleging that pre-publication licensing requirements were akin to tyranny. (available at <http://www.uark.edu/depts/comminfo/freespeech/lilburne.txt.html>). In 1634 Busher pleaded for the ability of nonconformists “to wryte and print as we wold” as “An Old Anabaptist from Amsterdam” who desired liberty of conscience for all sects. (Sprunger 1994:19). Laud’s book policies were a particular point of complaint in his impeachment.

of their own happiness, and whether to themselves or others are not less kings.¹⁶⁵

The union of the church and state, was a far greater threat to political order than religious Independents could possibly be. Drawing upon the long-standing consensus that Papists were intolerable for their loyalty to the pope – whom Papists allegedly regarded as capable of absolving them of obedience to the magistrate – the Socinian¹⁶⁶ Paul Best argues that Presbyterians are “engaged to the same doctrin of putting out of the State, the King, Parliament, or any other civill Magistrate.” Presbyterians were in fact worse than Papists because their doctrines empower all people – “in whom sovereign power resides originally” – to banish those who don’t conform to their religious views.¹⁶⁷ They undermine the magistrate’s power by claiming a monopoly over the coercive capacity of the state. The Independents, more reasonably from their own perspective, do not reduce the law to religion but merely seek autonomy in spiritual matters without being relieved of obligation to civil law.

Richard Overton also argues that Presbytery is anti-magisteriall by defining the state in terms of civil peace.¹⁶⁸ The purpose of government is to protect the rights of

¹⁶⁵ Milton, John. *Eikonoklastes* Published in 1649 in justification of the execution of Charles I in respons to Eikon Basilike, also published after Charles’ execution, which portrayed him as a martyr. See also Ainsworth, David. “Spiritual Reading in Milton’s *Eikonoklastes*,”(2005) and Richard Bradford, *The Complete Critical Guide to John Milton* (2001).

¹⁶⁶ Socinians were an anti-trinitarian sect that flourished in Poland until they were kicked out in 1638. In doctrine they emphasized human will and opposed the idea of predestination and divine omniscience. They regarded Christ’s existence as having begun when he took human form. Modern Unitarians trace their roots to Socinians, who were also known as the Polish Brethren in mid to late 17th century.

¹⁶⁷ Best, Paul. *A Letter of Advice unto the Ministers Assembled at Westminster, with severall parcels of Queries, recommended to their saddest Considerations* (1646). Thomason / E.334[13]. British Library.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Overton. *Divine Observations Upon the London-Ministers Letter against Toleration: By his synoddicall, Priest-byter-all, Nationall, Provinciall, Classical,*

people rather than to propagate an established truth and subordinate people to it. People are the agents of truth and thus the constituting force of the polity. Government should facilitate the pursuit of truth by arbitrating conflicts among people, not by mandating what an individual should believe or how communities may practice. Control of religion compromised the duty of the state to ensure well being within the commonwealth by protecting only one group of citizens and fomenting hatred and competition within the polity. “States minding their true interest – namely the good and welfare of the people – ought by all means to suppress in every sect or degree of men (whether papists, episcopals, presbyters, Independents, Anabaptists, etc.) the spirit of domination and persecution, the disquieter and disturber of mankind, the offspring of Satan.”¹⁶⁹

In a number of toleration arguments Presbyterianism was thus presented as incompatible with the very notion of government because it tied the legitimacy of the civil magistrate to divine prescription. John Milton, for example, in *On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament*, depicts Presbyterians as slave drivers who enchain people’s “Consciences that Christ set free” and impose the hierarchy of the Episcopal church that they had “envi’d not abhor’d” before they were possessed of civil power. Parliament pretends an interest in the moral state of the nation only to enact oppression worse than that of the Episcopal church government: “*New Presbyter* is but

Congregationall, Superlative, Un-erring, Clericall, Academicall Holynesse, Reverend Tongue Martin Mar-Priest, Sonne, and Heire to Old Martin teh Metrapolitane. (1645). The pamphlet was identified as sold at the shop of Bartholmew Bang-Priest, at his shop in Toleration-Street, at the signe of the Subjects Libersy, right opposite to Persecution Court. Thomason E.317[15]

¹⁶⁹ Overton, Richard. *Divine Observations Upon the London Ministers Letter against Toleration* 1645, p. 13.

Old Priest writ Large".¹⁷⁰

The idea of the government as a source of peace is the basis of Jeremy Taylor's *Theologica eklektike A Discourse of The Liberty of Prophesying Shewing The UNREASONABLENES of prescribing to other mens Faith, and the Iniquity of persecuting differing opinions* (1647).¹⁷¹ Taylor was one of the few Anglican divines to argue for toleration during the Civil War period, although he was perhaps an unlikely advocate given his close relationship with Archbishop Laud early in his career. He argued that the idea of promoting unity through orthodoxy was a well-intended but mistaken policy. It was based in the hope that "Unity of a Guide would have perswaded unity of mindes," but the guide itself became the source of contention and "part of the fire that was to be quenched." It is better for princes to extend toleration because if they do not people will convene in private and their ideas will be potentially more subversive, "denying of the publick worship will certainly produce private Conventicles against which all wise Princes and Common-Wealths have upon great reasons made Edicts and severe Sanctions" (18). In other words, history shows that violence deepens resistance and that compelling people to meet in cellars breeds subversion.

Like Hooker several decades earlier, Taylor begins by assuming that those with whom he disagrees theologically are earnest in their beliefs and rational rather than willfully subversive:

And it were well if men would as much consider themselves as the Doctrines, and think that they may as well be deceiv'd by their own weaknesse, as perswaded by the Arguments of a Doctrine which other men, as wise, call inevident. For it is a

¹⁷⁰ Milton, John. On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament (1646). Luxon, Thomas H., ed. *The Milton Reading Room*, http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/conscience/index.shtml, June 2009.

¹⁷¹ Thomason / E.395[2]. British Library.

hard case that we shall think all Papists and Anabaptists and Sacramentarians to be fooles and wicked persons, certainly among all these Sects there are very many wise men and good men, as well as erring; and although some zeales are so hot, and their eyes so inflamed with their ardors, that they doe not think their Adversaries look like other men, yet certainly we find by the results of their discourses, and the transactions of their affairs of civill society that they are men that speak and make syllogisms, and use reason, and read Scripture, and although they do no more understand all of it, then we doe, yet they endeavor to understand as much as concerns them... why should I hate such persons whom God loves, and who love God, who are partakers of Christ... because their understandings have not been brought up like mine, have not had the same Masters, they have not met with the same books, not the same company, or have not the same interest, or are not so wise, or else are wiser...(9-10)

Since truth is unavailable through any institution of verification, not through scripture, tradition or ecclesiastical councils, which Taylor examines one at a time, one person's understanding of truth cannot be "prest on others as an Article of Faith." Compulsion in religious matters is only legitimate where there is absolute certainty and automatic assent of "all men" about the words of God and their specific meaning (14). The condition of uncertainty that predominates in matters of faith means that reason rather than truth – again in terms established by Hooker as the basis of Anglican unity – must be the basis for collective life. Government and religion are intended to enhance the lives of people rather than to sow division and strife. Thus reason dictates that any doctrine that destroys government and the well-being of the political body cannot be endured. Piety and the public good are the limits of toleration. Religion exists "to meliorate the condition of a people, not to doe it disadvantage." It is "an addition of the capacity to a Commonwealth" and thus it is illogical for it to undermine the necessity and interests of that which it was "super-added for advantage and conservation" (245).

Taylor is careful in the introduction to his text to state that his suggested toleration of diversity does not include ideas that undermine government or attack the foundations

of the faith. Nor does he intend to encourage variety, but merely acknowledge that many sects exist and that diversity of opinion and beliefs is inevitable:

...and therefore since there are and ever were, and ever will be variety of opinions, because there is a variety of humane understandings and uncertainty in things, no man should be too forward in determining all Questions, nor so forward in prescribing to others, nor invade that liberty which God hath left to us intire by propounding many things obscurely, and by exempting our souls and understanding from all power externally compulsory.

His objective is to impose restraint on men's impulse toward tyranny but not license their opinions. Like Hooker, Taylor employs the notion of uncertainty to challenge claims to power on the basis of divine truth. Hooker, however, was primarily concerned with protecting the status quo from dissident or nonconformist ministers whose claims to divine knowledge could inspire popular challenges to civil authority. Taylor wrote from the political minority as an Anglican divine under a state church controlled by a Puritan Parliament. He had direct experience of such claims as a source of political power and suffered the imposition of a religious practice to which he did not subscribe.

Perry Miller characterized the puritan (Presbyterian) theory of church and state as an "elaborate restatement of a medieval ideal" (1983:429). A number of anti-toleration arguments reflect this understanding of the state as responsible for fostering spiritual virtue. A 1646 anti-toleration pamphlet, for example, argued, "The intent of Government not being to make men hypocrites but by Discipline to bring wicked and wanton wits to a sight of their errours."¹⁷² The state should not be equal in its protection, the pamphlet claims; the orthodox are more worthy of protection than the sectaries. Equal protection is protection in accordance with men's defects: "The magistrate neither doth nor ought to

¹⁷² Anon. *Anti-Toleration, Or a Modest Defense of the Letter of the London Ministers to the Reverend Assembly of Divines. By a Wel-wisher of Peace and Truth.* April 1646, p. 8. Thomason / E.333[12]. British Library.

protect any simply as men but as good men” (28). Where the sectaries understood the disciplinary force of religion to properly occur within voluntary communities, the Presbyterians attributed this role to the state as a whole. The overriding purpose of the state to encourage the development of individual virtue required that the state set a standard and treat people according to their achievement of it. For the sects, equality *vis à vis* the state meant that every person had an equal potential to experience God that the state could inhibit, but not enhance. For the Presbyterians, however, the state existed to put force behind spiritual requisites and was thus obliged not to protect people equally but according to their defects.

Toleration and the Question of Conscience

Samuel Rutherford in *Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience* (1649),¹⁷³ agrees with Taylor that the point of government is civil peace, but sees peace as utterly irreconcilable with religious diversity. A fierce opponent of toleration, Rutherford objected to liberty of conscience because extending it supported the notion that conscience should be a person’s guide to action. To substitute conscience for God and the Bible, to deny the uncertainty of what a person believes and accept belief as the measure of truth, would render impossible the task of maintaining public peace. Where Taylor fears the translation of conscience, whether sincere or pretended, into justification of tyranny, Rutherford sees religious uniformity as an essential tool of civil government.

¹⁷³ Samuel Rutherford. *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience Tending to Resolve Doubts Moved by Mr. John Goodwin, John Baptist, Dr. Jer. Taylor, the Belgick Arminians, Socinians, and Other Authors Contending for Lawlesse Liberty, or Licentious Toleration of Sects and Heresies*. London: Printed by R.I. for Andrew Crook, and are to be sold at his shop, at the signe of the Green Dragon in St. Pauls Church-yard, MDCIL. [1649] Thomason / E.567[2]. British Library.

He understands the power of government to be conferred by God, and God's intention with respect to government is peace. God endowed man with the power to induce peace, and both conscience and the capacity of civil authority to shape it are part of that bequest.

Rutherford uses 'conscience' rather differently than his pro-toleration or separatist contemporaries. Separatists in particular used the term 'conscience' to refer to the emotional and intellectual experience of religious truth that varied from individual to individual. Conscience was the capacity through which the spirit moved within people and thus its lack of encumbrance was critical to God's work in the world. Rutherford feared popular empowerment on the basis of this alleged capacity to experience and express God and his conceptualization of conscience is specifically oriented toward neutralizing what he saw as the destabilizing potential of spiritual license. Like the Thomists of the previous century, Rutherford defines conscience as a servant to the word of God rather than as a source of individual judgment. It was not an exclusively interior state but a capacity to meet obligations. Nor was it a direct line to divine truth, but required proper education and cultivation because the fall had rendered it unreliable, "A Conscience void of knowledge is void of goodness" (7).

Rutherford's conscience had a public function much like Hooker's concept of 'reason'. Quite apart from the modern notion of conscience as the capacity for creative ethical or intellectual engagement with the world, Rutherford understood conscience as the capacity to reconcile one's self to a public consensus. For Hooker reason was the capacity to see the logic of the bishops, while for Rutherford conscience was the capacity to accept the mandate of the presbyters. Both were ultimately concerned with the stability of the political realm and the social consequences of multiple truths.

Presbyterians generally dealt with the problem of multiple truths arising from private judgment by denouncing some people as incapable of guidance by their consciences. Robert Baylie¹⁷⁴ argues, for example, that he is motivated by conscience to advocate Presbyterian government above all other forms and to reject toleration on grounds of his belief in its unlawfulness. When the question of policy is merely one of opinion powered by belief who should be the arbiter? Some anti-tolerationists argue that a conscience must be correctly informed in order to be a reliable source of individual judgment. They reject the notion that there is a native human capacity for truth. Truth and reason are both a consequence of discipline and education.

The arguments in favor of toleration indicate a growing association between the idea of conscience and the capacity to be an upstanding participant in society. As Locke would elaborate in *Letter Concerning Toleration*, conscience was the source of a person's ability to obey the law and recognize interests beyond his or her own. Promises, covenants and oaths, Locke declares, are the bonds of human society, and orientation toward divinity in some fashion is the basis of fulfilling them. The nature of conscience however, was a major point of disagreement. Presbyterians generally had a rather dismal regard for the self-disciplining capacity of human beings. Conscience was at best a capacity to be educated toward proper behavior rather than a natural tendency toward virtuous sociability.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Baillie. *A dissuasive from the errours of the time wherein the tenets of the principall sects, especially of the Independents, are drawn together in one map, for the most part in the words of their own authours, and their maine principles are examined by the touch-stone of the Holy Scriptures*. London (1945) Wing / B456. Henry Huntington Library.

Samuel Parker, like Rutherford, thought licensing conscience as a source of individual guidance would result in anarchy.¹⁷⁵ Conscience was “the Last refuge for Godly Disobedience” and subordinating the law to its caprice would render the country ungovernable:

When men’s arguments depend upon their Wills, ‘tis their own power to repeal them, and all the Reason in the world can never cure willful and artificial Scruples. However, if the obligation of Laws must yield to that of a weak and tender Conscience, how impregnably is every man, that has a mind to obey, arm’d against all the commands of his Superiours? (268).

Religion could not be left to people to determine on their own because their inherent wickedness would only be enhanced and deepened by religious convictions. The coercive capacity of civil government was indispensable to the proper training of conscience so that people would obey the law. The inner light that the dissenting sects regarded as a source of truth was at best a shadowed and corrupted vestige of God’s truth. Rather than imposing limits on the law, it must be “restrain’d with a more peremptory and unyielding rigour, than naked and unsanctified Villany; else will they quickly discover themselves to be pregnant with greater and more fatal dangers” (272). Reason for Parker is recognition and voluntary conformity to the true law and church rather than discrimination on the basis of one’s own judgment. Conformity is a consequence of maturity; those who do not conform are immature and thus best directed by their betters.

Rutherford and Parker’s rejection of the self-disciplining capacity of individuals can be understood in part as a reaction to the Nonconformist understanding of conscience

¹⁷⁵ Samuel Parker. *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie Wherein the Authority of the Civil Magistrate over the Consciences of Subjects in Matters of Religion is Asserted, the Mischiefs and Inconveniences of Toleration are Represented, and all Pretenses Pleaded in Behalf of Liberty of Conscience are Fully Answered*. London: Printed for John Martyn 1670. Union Theological Seminary Library

as the means through which divinity is expressed in the world. Some Nonconformist theologies were populist in the sense that they see pure hearted simple people as the agents of God, and the trappings of class and intellectual cultivation as corrupting, worldly influences that obscure the truth. Reformation of the political and social world, some believed, would come through individual awakening to the inner light. George Fox's "Quakers" are the most recognized adherents of this view among contemporary observers, but in the mid-seventeenth century there were a variety of groups that attributed the condition of the world to the unawakened consciences of the greater society. These groups saw individual believers as the means through which worldly suffering would be alleviated, and a more just order would be manifest. Christ would build his heavenly city on earth through their faith and effort. Between 1640 and 1660 numerous prophets and preachers from the ranks of common people heralded the imminent appearance of God in the world. Women in particular used emotional and somatic states such as trances, visions and dreams to authenticate their prophecy as the immediate and infallible revelation of God. Common people commanded authority in the public realm by presenting themselves as vehicles of divine expression.

Such "enthusiasm" had been a powerful source of guidance and inspiration to the New Model Army during the Civil Wars and it continued to be a resource in constructing legitimacy for the new regime. Anna Trapnel, one of the most famous prophetesses from this period, commanded an audience that included members of Parliament and officers of the New Model Army as she condemned Cromwell for abandoning ordinary people and the godly revolution. Her extended trances, prolific writing and pointed political critiques

gave her considerable prominence among her contemporaries.¹⁷⁶ The General Council of the New Model Army granted an audience to Elizabeth Poole, to hear her prophecy affirming the army as the legitimate stewards of the public good. Both cases illustrate the importance of divine revelation for constructing legitimacy. They are also striking examples of the sense of individual relevance to national politics inspired by religious commitments during this period.

The Bloody Independent Plot Discovered (1647), on the other hand, demonstrates the fear of lawlessness inspired by this spiritual empowerment of ordinary people. The rhetoric used in the pamphlet indicates that its authors are Presbyterians who desired reconciliation with Charles I. They accused Anabaptists, Levellers, Agitators, Brownists, Sectaries and London Agents of plotting to murder the king, divide the army, level class divisions and abolish the Protestant religion” in the name of conscience. Conscience, which the sects understand as inner truth, the authors of the pamphlet regard as wanton justification of ill deeds and disrespect by members of the New Model Army, particularly Lilburne and his regiment:

If their Consciences shall dictate any thing to them, as to murder, rob, commit adultery, equivocate or the like, and act any thing, though never so evill, so it be destructive to those that are without, (as they term them) that is, That have no Community with them; they are bound to doe it, because their Conscience dictates it unto them; Nay they willfully sin against God if they doe it not, as their own tongues confesse.¹⁷⁷

The separatists claim to conscience had led the English nation into seven years of blindness and bondage, cheating and deluding honest people of their happiness.

¹⁷⁶ See Hinds, Hilary. *The Cry of a Stone by Anna Trapnel*. (2000); Mack, Phyllis. *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century England* (1995:77); Wiseman, Susan. *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing and Politics* (2006).

¹⁷⁷ Anon. *A Bloody Independent Plot Discovered*. (1647) p.7. Thomason / E.419 [2].

Subjection and obedience to the monarchy, the authors argued, were a better basis for securing political rights. Law authorized the monarchy, which in turn held power over the people. A polity secured by law and tradition was more likely to avail its members of the liberty and freedom sought under the auspices of conscience that had led only to misery, ruin and bondage (1647:8).

There was also a more pragmatic understanding of conscience as a remote and mysterious capacity within people that could promote loyalty, obedience to the law and peaceful membership within society, or render them implacable. Conscience was the source of differences of opinion that had been troubling for so many decades and it appeared unlikely to go away. Laws requiring religious conformity are presented in these arguments as inducing dishonesty and forcing hypocrisy. They threatened the very foundation of political legitimacy by compelling people to betray their deepest feelings and beliefs. Conversion from heresy is impossible to know, and the proceedings against heretics are “ungodly, unwarrantable and impertinent” because they tempt people to be hypocrites.

From one point of view absolute truth is unknown, thus imposing doctrine upon people might be preventing its emergence. But from another standpoint, even if truth were known the necessity of voluntary embrace of the truth renders coercion unproductive. Paul Best’s challenge to the London Ministers, for example, demanded:

Whether can any man prove his owne Religion from Scripture, to be better than an other man’s, since the being fully perswaded in a man’s own heart, is the surest rule and guide both to the one and other?¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ *A Letter of Advice unto the Ministers Assembled at Westminster, with severall parcels of Queries, recommended to their saddest considerations.* Paul Best. (1646). Thomason / E.334[13]. British Library.

If coercion is both ineffective and inconsistent with Christian doctrine, diversity of conscience must be accommodated rather than continually suppressed. The larger purpose of civil peace is unreasonably sacrificed to an ideal of Christian unity through efforts to impose a single religious practice.

Roger Williams' *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*

(1644)¹⁷⁹ draws upon the early Baptist arguments for liberty of conscience for all people as a fundamental aspect of Christianity:

It is the will and command of God that, since the coming of his Son, the Lord Jesus, a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish or anti-christian consciences and worships be granted to all men in all nations and countries: and that they are only to be fought against with that sword which is only, in soul matters, able to conquer: to wit, the sword of God's Spirit, the word of God.

He prefaced his own argument with a 1620 tract written by John Murton that declares the king to be "lord and lawgiver to the bodies of his subjects" but Christ alone to be lord over conscience. No man ought to be compelled to worship in a particular manner, he argued, even if it meant that he would "walk in falsehood." Williams' position was endorsed by Overton, whose *The Arraignment of Mr Persecution* (1645) made the same argument.¹⁸⁰

Questions Propounded to the Assembly to answer by the Scriptures: whether

¹⁷⁹ *The bloody tenet, of persecution, for cause of conscience [sic], discussed, in a conference between truth and peace, who, in all tender affection, present to the high court of Parliament, (as the result of their discourse) these, (amongst other passages) of highest consideration.* London (1644). John Carter Brown Library.

¹⁸⁰ For a full discussion of advocacy of toleration within the Baptist tradition and the link between the Baptists and the Levellers see Coffey, John. "Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41. No. 4 (Dec. 1998) pp. 961-985. Coffey notes that both Overton and Lilburne belonged to separatist churches, Overton to Thomas Lambe's General Baptist church and Lilburne to the separatist congregation of Edward Rosier. Walwyn also had close ties to the separatist congregations in London but there is no record of his having been a member of one.

corporall punishments may be inflicted upon such as hold different opinions in religion, by Samuel Richardson in 1646, also challenges religious persecution on the grounds of consistency with Christian values as well as political effectiveness.¹⁸¹ The reason of state, he contends, is a legitimate basis for restricting ideas that might threaten it but matters of conscience should not fall within the state's purview. Granting power over conscience to the magistrate presumes erroneously that the position endows the magistrate with the capacity to judge what is beyond the reach of any but God. It endows too broad a power to the magistrate that results in suffering to the innocent as well as the guilty. And perhaps most importantly such compulsion produces the wrong results: "God hath no need of hypocrites, much less of forced ones: God will have those to worship him, as can worship him in spirit and truth, *John 4*" (5). Religious persecution forecloses spiritual conversion and undermines its purported political purpose. Persecution "harden men in their way and make them cry out of oppression and tyranny." Freedom of conscience, by contrast, would 'joyn all sorts of persons to the Magistrate, because each share in the benefit."

Natural law, according to Richardson, dictates that man must worship God in accordance with his own conscience. Relinquishing one's duty to one's own beliefs is no better than "putting out our eyes and see by the eyes of others who are as dim-sighted: In my judgment your judgement is a lye: will ye compell me to believe a lye? compell ye a man to be present at a worship which he loaths?" The magistrate's responsibility toward the commonwealth is derived from the same duty to conscience that all people have in pursuing the truth. With regard to the religion that he is persuaded is true, the magistrate

¹⁸¹ Thomason / E.1182[6]. British Library. Pamphlet signed "S.R." and identified as authored by Samuel Richardson.

owes approbation and respect for those who profess its truth, submission of his soul to the power of Jesus and protection of people and their estates from violence and injury. To adherents of a religion he deems to be false, the magistrate owes permission for public peace and quietness – but not approbation – and protection of the goods and persons under his authority. Like Taylor (and later Hobbes), he invokes the Hebrew kings to emphasize the distinction between the power of a religious leader and that of a civil magistrate. Hebrew kings did not impose religious law upon strangers but only on those who shared their faith. The voluntary commitment necessary to the protestant faith necessitated separation between religious and political authority.

Toleration and Political Authority

To some degree, the whole question of toleration is about the basis of public life. What does, or should constitute the collective and toward what can people be legitimately compelled? What terms of membership would promote social cohesion and obedience to the law without inducing a state of tyranny? The debate is in many ways an attempt to account for mass participation in society, and reckon with the inevitability of diversity. One anti-toleration pamphlet clearly demonstrates fear of the impact of popularizing religious authority. “These Tradesmen are Preachers in and about the City of London,” the headline declares above pictures of people engaged in work as button makers, glovers, soap boilers and a variety of other trades. A list of forty nine “dangerous and damnable tenets” that common preachers propagate are presented under the images. These “Erronious, Heriticall and Mechannick spirits” threaten the foundation of Christian

knowledge and practice.¹⁸² The list includes challenges to human exceptionalism, attribution of arbitrary judgment to God, claims to spiritual equality and universal redemption, affirmation of divorce, and denial of husbands' authority over their wives.

The effort to ground political authority in the wake of the civil wars is evident in a number of political treatises during this period, most notably Anthony Ascham's *Of the Confusions and revolutions of Governments* (1649),¹⁸³ and Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651). Both Ascham and Hobbes examine the potential of reason and conscience as the basis of political life and measure of legitimacy. Ascham argued that public authority and reason were inherently incompatible:

...the ground of the first is peremptoriness of the Will, and the ground of the other is the Intellect and Insinuation of Perswasion, so that in their results they necessarily exclude one the other. For in making all perswaders, and thereby equall Judges of Reason, authority is presently dethroned; and on the other side in admitting Authority, there must be no dispute.

He rejected the notion that reason was an inherent capacity to recognize the truth, or that it would inevitably lead people to consensus. Reason operates within an existing system of authority, which presumes an initial abrogation of the intellect. He essentially rejects the notion that a fully voluntary polity is possible: reason might be the basis of consensus between people but it was an inadequate means of inducing public obedience. Rather like Thrasymachus, he argues that force will trump reason, if only by silencing it. Reason is the realm of freedom; one's obedience is conditional upon acceptance of the logic of the

¹⁸² Anon. *A Discovery of the Most Dangerous and Damnable Tenets That Have Been Spread Within This Few years: By many Erronious, Heriticall and Mechannick Spirits. By which the very foundation of Christian knowledge and practise is endeavoured to be overturned.* April 26, 1647. Thomason / 669.f.11[6] British Library.

¹⁸³ Ascham, Anthony. *Of the confusions and revolutions of governments wherein is examined how farre a man may lawfully conforme to the powers and commands of those who with various successes hold kingdomes divided by civill or forreigne warres.* London: Printed by W. Wilson. 1649. Henry Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

argument or one's disposition toward its conclusions. Where reason reigns, people are free to determine their own private authority. Authority on the other hand, is the realm of necessity. People are not free to obey but obliged to do so by "Seargants, Soldiers, hatchets and Gibbets" (151). Both cannot be the basis of order within a state. Reason may persist in private, "till we come to the sword point of Authority, yet arriving there; we should forfeit our best Reasons, if we would not be silent, and stop at that point, beyond which there is no appeal, argument or Motion allowed" (151).

What then might provide an adequate basis for collective acceptance of authority? According to Ascham revelation is an even less likely basis for public authority, despite persuasive power over individuals:

The Spirit hath the greatest proofe for itselfe within, but hath the least Evidence for it self without and therefore it cannot be offer'd either as the sentence of a Judge, or as the Reason of a Doctour, because no body can know it... unlesse it be accompanied with Miracles which may be seen. (150)

Ultimately, Ascham argues that without an unquestioned tradition or unassailable miracles there is no way to ensure common acceptance of emotional or intellectual experiences of truth. Thus neither was a viable basis for political authority. Nor does the law need an ultimate grounding in truth or divinity. Human laws, he argues, are reminiscent of God's direct intervention in world affairs but their accord with divine order is not "their original and Primary force of obliging." Reason of state, he contends, "is not busied so much about inward piety and vertue, as it is about publique quiet and repose, or those actions which regard another mans receiving right or wrong" (Ch.2, p.7).

Thomas Hobbes shares both Ascham's pessimism about the prospects of grounding political authority in either reason or religious experience and his understanding of the role of the state in ensuring public peace rather than promoting

individual virtue. Both are agnostic about the truth value of religious claims, and emphasize instead the potential for certainty and public agreement in such matters. But Hobbes differs from Ascham, who writes as a casuist helping his fellow citizens to reconcile themselves to the Protectorate and persuade them of their obligation to its authority whatever their regard for its origins. Hobbes, despite his emphasis on the dynamics within the state, offers a prescription for government grounded in individual capacity. He speaks to a concept of conscience that is being put forth as justification for community autonomy from the state and as the basis for political resistance. Absolute monarchy is central to his theory not because it has worked for England as a community in the past, but because an undivided authority is the only way to prevent the instability of human conscience from fostering factiousness within the political realm. He shares the grim assessment of human capacity for self discipline that prevailed among Presbyterians. People are vain and self-serving and without external compulsion they are incapable of forming stable collectives. If there are two interests there will be competition, and both will mask interest in terms of truth if truth is the language of political justification.

Toleration and the Protectorate: Christian unity and citizenship

Oliver Cromwell endorsed an ideal of Christian unity as the basis for religious toleration of Protestants who shared a minimal belief in the transformative power of faith (Fletcher 1990). In a 1654 address to Parliament he declared:

Is not Liberty of Conscience in religion a fundamental? So long as there is liberty of conscience for the supreme magistrate to exercise his conscience in erecting what form of church government he is satisfied he should set up, why should not he give it to others? Liberty of conscience is a natural right... All the money of this nation

would not have tempted men to fight upon such an account as they have engaged if they had not had hopes of liberty, better than they had from Episcopacy, or than would have been afforded them from a Scottish Presbytery, or an English either...

The problem of political order remained however, and limited how far toleration was actually extended under the Protectorate. Cromwell brutally suppressed Catholics in Ireland for their support of Charles I and within England Catholics, Anglicans and the more radical religious sects were relegated from public religious practice. Amidst the toleration debates of the 1670s and 1680s Cromwell's Protectorate was remembered as a period free from religious persecution and cited as a successful precedent for religious toleration.¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, religious toleration under Cromwell was a far cry from liberty of conscience. Cromwell understood the church and nation to be coextensive and religion to be a vital aspect of political unity. The state was responsible for establishing the bylaws of the church and defining orthodoxy in order to preserve the Protestant Christian community from the excesses of an intolerant clergy (Worden 2007: 247). Liberty of conscience from Cromwell's point of view was the liberty to be persuaded of the true religion. Persecution obviated the voluntary embrace of truth that was vital to Calvinist teachings. If people accepted certain doctrines because of coercion, their belief was meaningless from a spiritual point of view. If people were persecuted their opportunity to freely embrace the true religion might be foreclosed, to the spiritual detriment of themselves and the Protestant community.

The alliance between Cromwell and the gathered churches collapsed in the

¹⁸⁴ Historians tend to agree that toleration increased during the Interregnum but dispute its causes. Worden, for example, attributes the relative decline in persecution to the greater difficulty of controlling religious dissent. Blair Worden, "Toleration and the Cromwellian protectorate," in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration*. Oxford, (1984) p. 201.

absence of their common opposition to the king. Cromwell and the more conservative (Presbyterian) faction in Parliament regarded the political radicalism of the Levellers in particular as fatally destabilizing to the new regime. The more overtly political religious sects, particularly the various Baptist churches and the Fifth Monarchists, responded to repression by elaborating the link between religious liberty and rights guaranteed them by the ancient English constitution. They had an equal responsibility as citizens and were equally invested in the fate of the nation as a consequence of their support for the Army during the wars.

Anna Trapnel, for example, declared that as a tax paying citizen and an English woman she was entitled to pursue God's will and address the ills of the country according to her own discretion.¹⁸⁵ Overton claimed that the gathered churches were "equally, fully and properly interested in the safety, welfare and government of the Kingdom" and had been the source of the Protectorate's power. They shared with the Presbyterians and Independents a common interest in a tradition of law that protected people equally from arbitrary incursion by the state and ensured specific liberties.¹⁸⁶ A petition by a group of women for the release of four Leveller men¹⁸⁷ demonstrates the importance of this perceived tradition of rights among religious dissidents in claiming political equality and defending themselves against persecution:

Sheweth that since we are assured of our creation in the image of God, and of an interest in Christ equal unto men, as also of a proportional share in the freedoms of this commonwealth, we cannot but wonder and grieve that we should appear so despicable in your eyes as to be thought unworthy to petition or represent our

¹⁸⁵ Trapnel, Anna. *Report and Plea*. (1654). Harvard University Library.

¹⁸⁶ Richard Overton, *Vox Plebis: Or, The Voice of the Oppressed Commons of England Against their Oppressors*. (1653). Thomason / E.691[13], British Library.

¹⁸⁷ The Leveller leaders were Richard Overton, John Lilburne, Thomas Prince and William Walwyn.

grievances to this honourable House. Have we not an equal interest with the men of this nation in those liberties and securities contained in the Petition of Right, and other good laws of the land? Are any of our lives, limbs, liberties or goods to be taken from us more than from men, but by due process of law and conviction of twelve sworn men of the neighbourhood?

Political rights were a consequence of membership within the polity, which was not in their view determined by religious conformity.

In the Leveller arguments of Chidley, Overton, Lilburne and Walwyn, along with those of the Fifth Monarchists and various Baptists sects religious liberty was further conceived in terms of democratic representation and social equality. Overton in particular linked political and religious liberty through his concept of ‘self-propriety’:

To every individual in nature is given an individual property by nature, not to be invaded or usurped by any: for everyone as he is himself, so he hath a self propriety, else he could not be himself... For by natural birth all men are equally and alike born to like propriety, liberty and freedom.¹⁸⁸

The divine origin of this property in one’s self rendered it inalienable. People could neither legitimately take control over one another nor subordinate themselves to another’s control. Religious establishment, whether through a monarch or a church council, subordinated the consciences of many to those of a few and were thus akin to tyranny.

Quentin Skinner demonstrates that the natural condition of liberty was not in itself justification for citizenship. The Levellers, and Parliamentarians such as Henry Parker, John Marsh and John Goodwin, distinguished between liberty and dependence in arguments for suffrage. Civil liberty essentially required that those within a civil association were not subservient to another’s will. John Goodwin, for example, argues that liberty – a condition available to women as well as men – is having “disposal of your

¹⁸⁸ Overton, Richard. *An Arrow Against All Tyrants And Tyranny*. October 1646. Thomason / E.356[14], British Library.

selves and of all your wayes”. If someone is able to “make themselves Lords over you” you lose your birthright of “civill or politick libertie” and are reduced to a state of bondage. Skinner argues that exclusion of servants from “manhood suffrage” is not merely a tactical departure from a commitment to universal rights, but a principled grounding of such rights on individual autonomy.¹⁸⁹ His analysis emphasizes the importance of this framing of civil liberty in galvanizing resistance to the king within Parliament and excluding bishops from the house of Lords but he does little to link it to the “true Religion” the Parliamentarians would later secure.

Construing civil liberty in terms of an autonomous will established liberty of conscience not merely as a protected political right but as the condition upon which all other rights rest. This perspective condemned and excluded Catholics who were beholden to the will of the pope, as well as Anglicans who subjected themselves to the king. Prescriptions in matters of conscience were illegitimate because they imposed upon this natural condition of self-propriety, thus religious persecution was a violation of the fundamental basis of English liberties. Subjecting one’s self to such prescriptions by embracing popery or submitting to the will of the king was voluntary enslavement. It was a violation of divine law that surrendered the condition of political stewardship. Not manhood per se, nor economic independence was the basis of citizenship. Spiritual autonomy was the essential condition for fulfillment of the divine covenant.

¹⁸⁹ Skinner highlights the arguments of Henry Ireton, Oliver Cromwell, Maximillian Petty and Thomas Reade. Ireton is identified by other scholars (Burgess and Festenstein 2007, p.73) as an Independent. Unlike most Levellers he did not endorse relegating the state from religion (Coffey 2008, p. 171). Skinner situates his argument in the context of the contrast between C.B. Macpherson’s interpretation that wage labor was an alienation of inherent liberty and Keith Thomas’s rejection of any ideological basis for exclusion. Macpherson, C.B. *Possessive Individualism*. Keith Thomas. “The Levellers and the Franchise” (1972).

Toleration was thus not an acceptable solution to the problem of religious difference as it was essentially an indulgence within a condition of subjugation. The concept of liberty that animated Parliament's rebellion against the king rejected any "bondage, thralldome and servitude," regardless of its impact of the common good.¹⁹⁰ "Free people" are not dependent upon on the good will or mercy of another (Skinner 2006:164).

Slavery and tyranny were powerful tropes in challenging the king and their development by the New Model Army and Parliament relied heavily on the experiences of the Israelites and examples from the Christian Bible. The king was compared to pharaoh and deemed worse than Turks, who enslaved Englishmen only in body but left their minds free. Encroachment upon a person's conscience inhibited the movement of providence in the world and was thus a violation of the will of God and the purpose of government. Yet when it came to constituting a new government there was disagreement regarding the role of the state in spiritual matters. The Whitehall Debate among Levellers and Independents following Pride's Purge of the Presbyterian members of Parliament demonstrates various understandings of liberty of conscience among those for whom it had inspired rebellion.

Henry Ireton was among those who believed that a properly determined magistrate, one whose authority rested on the consent of the people, had an important role in suppressing heresy. Ireton endorsed a broad toleration of orthodox Protestants but he believed that the "light of reason" enabled people to discern the evil of false religion, and the example of the Israelite kings from scripture obliged magistrates to restrain it. He

¹⁹⁰ Overton, *An Arrow Against All Tyrants and Tyranny*. 1646, p. 4-6.

feared the consequences of “anything which men will call religion” being exempted from civil authority. In his view, the blanket protection of liberty of conscience in the *Agreement of the People of England*¹⁹¹ was a threat to civil order. The document affirmed the Christian faith as the “publike profession in this Nation” but limited promotion of the reformed faith to persuasion. The government, “our Representatives” could support religious instruction from the public treasury but it could not impose tithes. Christians, regardless of their doctrine, worship or discipline, were to be protected in the free exercise of conscience – constrained only by civil injury to others and disturbance of the public peace. Adherents to popery or prelacy were specifically exempted from these protections however. Ireton rejected this license “to practice idolatry, to practice atheism, and anything that is against the light of God.”¹⁹²

John Goodwin by contrast, asserted that “God hath not invested any power in a civill magistrate in matters of religion.” In response to Ireton he maintained that the magistrate’s power was not analogous to that of the Old Testament kings because unlike them he was not directly appointed by God. The power of contemporary rulers stemmed instead from the people, and magistrates have (only) as much power as the people are willing to give them. People cannot bestow more power than they have however. Since the people do not have spiritual power over one another they cannot bestow it upon the magistrate:

If [it be] so, then if a body of people, as the commonality of this land, have not a

¹⁹¹ *An agreement of the people of England and the places therewith incorporated for a secure and present peace, upon grounds of common right, freedom and safety*. London: Printed for John Partridge, Rapha Harford, Giles Calvert, and George Whittington, 1649. Thomason / 669.f.14[59] British Library.

¹⁹² Woodhouse, A.S.P. (ed.). *Puritanism and Liberty Being the Army Debates (1647-9) from the Clarke Manuscripts*. (1951) p. 143.

power in themselves to restrain such and such things, as matters concerning false worship, amongst themselves, certain it is that they cannot derive any such power to the magistrate; but he does act it, [if at all], of himself, and by an assuming unto [himself of] that which was never given unto him.¹⁹³

John Wildman, also a Leveller, shared Goodwin's objections to civil discretion in religious matters, "God hath not given a command to all magistrates to destroy idolatry, for in consequence it would destroy the world." The magistrate was subject to the same weaknesses as all people and was thus more likely to destroy the good than prevent evil if he was singularly entrusted with power over religion. Although "authority hath been broken in pieces" by God's judgment against the king, religious uniformity could not be the basis for reconstituting it. It was "for men to find for themselves a new way of settling this nation, which is a new constitution."¹⁹⁴

Cromwell agreed with Goodwin and the Levellers that religious truth required liberty, which in turn required the free commerce of ideas. Presuming to know and control God's truth was blasphemy. Furthermore, suppression of conscience inhibited the expression of God in the world through activist citizens, who were responsible for upholding the divine covenant. The monarch, by subordinating divine will to a secular interest, had violated the conditions of the political covenant and was thus rightly deposed. The sects argued however that in assuming authority over religious matters Parliament was also overstepping the bounds of its role as caretaker of the nation. This arrangement was objectionable not merely because it was blasphemous, but because it fostered corruption that was anathema to the spirit of justice on which the political

¹⁹³ Sir William Clarke, *Puritanism and Liberty, being the Army Debates (1647-9)*, from *The Clarke Manuscripts*. Wodehouse (1951) Chapter: General Council 1 at Whitehall, 14th December 1648b.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Burgess and Festenstein (eds.) 2008, p. 75.

covenant was based. The danger of empowering people to act on the basis of their own consciences was dwarfed by the rampant injustice of the priests and bishops, who were not guided by any law but their own. Cromwell saw the state as a check against such excesses within the church while the separatist understood them as an unavoidable consequence of the union of civil and spiritual authority.

During the civil wars and Interregnum the protestant commitment to religious uncertainty was one means through which Separatists and Independents could challenge intolerant Puritans on shared theological ground. The spectre of Papism, which presumed such certainty, also provided a rhetorical resource to discredit efforts to subordinate religion to secular power. The Anglican church, despite its fusion of religious and political power in an absolute monarch, had since the end of the sixteenth century with Hooker, begun to ground itself in tradition and reason rather than certainty. These worldly forces were sufficient justification for civil and ecclesiastical power in a Christian polity, despite the viability of alternatives. Presbyterians increasingly accept this grounding of the Church of England, although they persist in their regard for scripture as the ultimate guide to religious truth and desire to purge the church of its papal vestiges.

Separatists viewed themselves as participants in a political tradition that did not rely on religious commonality, but rather on the preservation of the pursuit of religious truth according to one's conscience. They advocated a strong division between the religious and political community. Religious communities involved a voluntary commitment of the will and shared convictions regarding religious doctrine and practice. Their purpose was to cultivate the soul. The political community on the other hand, was a

worldly arrangement to secure civil peace. Its ultimate purpose was to secure the conditions under which people could pursue God's truth. The power of the state was thus limited to protecting people from harming one another and securing the commonwealth from external encroachment. Political rights *vis à vis* state power were guarantees of the conditions necessary for people to facilitate the movement of God in the world. These rights were an inviolable part of the ancient (divine) law that secured the mutual obligation between the governed and the ruler. Presbyterians also invoke this tradition of political liberties in rebelling against the king, but they understood rights and liberties as the provenance of the correctly believing. Where Separatists and Independents ultimately translate spiritual equality into a notion of equal political responsibility, the Presbyterians feared mass spiritual empowerment.

Anxiety about mass participation in society and the potential of spiritually empowered common people to wreak havoc on an already fractured public order was only part of the reason the question of religious toleration was such a central concern during this period. The debate was also about competing definitions of justice and the best means of realizing particular visions of the nature and purpose of a good society. The Presbyterians and conservative Independents were committed to the notion that there was a singular knowable Christian truth. The role of the state was to foster a society that lived in accordance with this truth. Presbyterian political thought was constitutionalist in the sense that religious leaders bore moral responsibility toward the nation and best understood the needs of their communities. However, Presbyterians were inclined against democracy for at least two reasons. First, they were undoubtedly pessimistic about the general capacity for self-discipline in society. Second, they understood God's will as

mediated by church elders, rather than expressed directly through individuals. They endorsed mixed government, but sought one in which civil and religious authorities worked together in service to the goals of the latter.

Anglicans, on the other hand, rejected the notion that the truth was knowable. Political authority could not draw upon an established truth as the basis of its legitimacy, nor was agreement about the nature of truth likely, given the individual nature of such understanding. In the absence of certainty, tradition was the basis of political authority. People owed allegiance and obedience to the government because it had developed historically in response to particular needs of the community. Corporate membership within the English Nation demanded obedience to the law regardless of the benefits one received or one's arguments with its requirements. Governing practices are not based on an absolute standard of justice, nor are they accountable to one. Rather than standing outside of the political system, reason and right are a consequence of its operation. Change is disruptive and thus runs counter to the purpose of the state to ensure peace and social stability.

Many dimensions of the discourse on toleration in the mid seventeenth century can be seen in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, in part because the work was a masterful effort to respond to the multitude of arguments about the nature of political authority. He takes the most extreme challenges to his own preferred form of government and rationally dismisses them on the basis of a materialist theory of individual capacity. By placing God outside of the realm of human affairs Hobbes makes a conceptual move similar to that of Hooker, who also regarded the state as a purely human construction. Yet for his purposes tradition is not an adequate justification for the ecclesiastical polity, as this arrangement

in recent memory hardly yielded the civil peace and bodily security that was the ultimate end of the state. Nor was scripture a reasonable basis for consensus as it was a matter of considerable disagreement. Hobbes wanted to take stock of an inherited tradition of social knowledge, of the names, metaphors and categories that were the basis of what people presumed to know in order to lend clarity to the cacophonous public debate. He challenged tradition, history (including scripture) and conscience as the basis of truth claims. Public life must be grounded in what can be known definitively and broadly accepted as true.

Hobbes began by clarifying terms because the use of concepts at cross purposes and attachment to beliefs that cannot be publicly substantiated clouded public debate. He dismissed belief as an unstable basis for political life because belief is nothing more than the authority one vests in a tradition of transmission. Belief and conscience are merely opinion dressed up as truth: “Men vehemently in love with their own opinions” give them “that revered name of conscience, as if they would have it seem unlawful to change or speak against them; and so pretend to know they are true, when they know, at most, but that they think so” (37). Belief, in a religious or doctrinal tradition, furthermore, is based on two opinions, one regarding the sayings of the man, and the other of his virtue. Truth claims, according to Hobbes, are always based on confidence in human beings:

If Livy says the Gods made once a cow speak, and we believe it not, we distrust not God therein, but Livy. So it is evident that whatsoever we believe upon no other reason than what is drawn from authority of men only and their writings, whether they be sent from God or not, is faith in men only” (37)

While Hobbes stops short of declaring God to be a social construction he does argue that the particular form of divinity that prevails within a society is an opportunistic

response to natural curiosity and fear of the unknown by those who sought power:

this fear of things invisible is the natural seed of that which everyone in himself calleth religion, and in them that worship or fear that power otherwise than they do, superstition. And this seed of religion having been observed by many, some of those that have observed it have been inclined thereby to nourish, dress and form it into laws, and to add to it, of their own invention, any opinion of the causes of future events by which they thought they should best be able to govern others, and make unto themselves the greatest use of their powers (63)

Religion, according to Hobbes, has been historically useful in promoting obedience and disposing people toward peace, charity and civil society but those who have used it in this manner do so of their own invention. Like Jeremy Taylor, Hobbes distinguishes between rulers who were directly commanded by God to establish a religion: Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and “founders of commonwealths and lawgivers of the gentiles.” Contemporary magistrates could not derive their powers from those accorded to Hebrew kings because they did not rule with the same degree of divine certainty.¹⁹⁵

Hobbes’s concern is to neutralize truth claims as a basis of political authority. He shares with the nonconformists an assessment of state religion as politically motivated, but unlike them he does not see this as detracting from its legitimacy. The purpose of the state in Hobbes’ view is bodily security. Civil peace is a material benefit to individuals

¹⁹⁵ Hobbes is not concerned with the veracity of these stories despite his critique of scripture as mere opinion. It may be the belief of those communities that their leaders were delegated directly by God that is important to his argument. His logic challenges any specific construction of God, or claim to truth but he nonetheless draws upon the Hebrew and Christian traditions in elaborating his argument. There is a strong implication in this passage of distinction between political and spiritual communities: “So that the religion of the former sort is a part of human politics and teacheth part of the duty which earthly kings require of their subjects. And the religion of the latter sort is divine politics and containeth precepts to those that have yielded themselves subjects in the kingdom of God” (67). Since for Hobbes the moment when subjects yield themselves is mythic rather than actual it is unclear how this sort of divine politics fits into his positivist view of the state. If nothing else it supports an interpretation of his work as polemical (Skinner 2008) rather than as a philosophically coherent treatise.

rather than a condition through which justice might be realized in the world. For Hobbes, truth is remote from the political realm and cannot be called upon to contest it. The nonconformists sought to preserve the realm of conscience from state intrusion because it was the means through which divine will was manifest in the world. In their understanding, the spiritual community fostered charity and good will, and its vision of justice obligated members to the political community. The purpose of the political community was to ensure civil peace so that truth could manifest itself in the world. Its legitimacy rested on the liberty of conscience and the freedoms of speech, press, and association were vital for people to pursue the truth.

Hobbes's contribution to the liberal tradition is highly contested. Some scholars attribute to him a foundational role in liberal political thought. According to this view, Hobbes's premises of equal natural rights and liberties and popular sovereignty became the basis for modern liberalism and democracy, which eventually superseded Hobbes's authoritarian conclusions (Strauss 1936, Macpherson 1970, Kraynak 1990, Ryan 1995, Okin 1989, Baumgold 1988). An alternative view of Hobbes's as a progenitor of liberal democratic theory is that of Richard Tuck, who interprets Hobbes's as intentionally democratic (2006:190). Others recognize his role in theorizing the modern state as a singular authority grounded entirely in human affairs, but are unwilling to place the authoritarian conclusions of his work in the liberal tradition (Skinner 2008, Wolin 1990, Shklar 1989). When considered in light of competing theories of politics at the time during which it was written, *Leviathan* appears to be more of a reactionary cooptation of the liberal premises of Hobbes' ideological opponents than *as the basis* for liberal democratic theorizing. The central question of Hobbes's day was how to cope with a

fractured political order and a politically engaged populace who have competing claims to interpreting the dominant narrative of political authority.¹⁹⁶ Hobbes sought to address this problem by allocating political power to a single source. Claims to conscience could neither be the basis of political power nor a reason for claiming exemption from obligation to it. If people did not bring their opinions into the street they would be able to abide peacefully in accordance with them.¹⁹⁷ Yet the problem of the state church from the point of view of dissenters was that the church reached into their lives and deprived them of this choice.

The religious question concerned the scope and necessity of the religious community and the limit of political power over people's lives. With respect to the former, Hobbes followed Hooker and the early Anglican logic that the responsibility of the individual was to the state rather than to God. The power that Hooker justified on the basis of indifference Hobbes derived from imperatives of human nature. The Church of England could command obedience regardless of individual beliefs because it was an expression of sovereign power and within the state individuals had no recourse to their own authority. Right and justice were entirely functions of the state. Hobbes defined individual investment in the state solely in term of body. There were no limits on the

¹⁹⁶ See Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*. (1987).

¹⁹⁷ In Chapter 29 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes includes among threats to the stability of the commonwealth the doctrine, "that every private man is the judge of good and evil actions," "that whatsoever a man does against his conscience is a sin" and the idea "that faith and sanctity are not to be attained by study and reason, but by supernatural inspiration and infusion." He targets prophets and "unlearned divines" as sources of popular perception that sanctity and reason were incompatible. People are the judges of their own actions where there is no state, or where the state does not regulate matters, "but otherwise it is manifest that the measure of good and evil actions is the civil law, and the judge the legislator, who is always representative of the commonwealth." (Chapter 29, 6-8).

power of the sovereign to intrude into people's lives and people could legitimately resist to preserve themselves only when their lives were threatened.

The liberal tradition begins instead with the Nonconformists, particularly the Levellers and the various sects that developed out of the Baptist tradition begun by Helwys, Smythe and Busher. The conception of the state in their arguments requires an external standard of justice and engaged citizens who are full members of the political contract. The role of the state is not to establish the truth but to create the conditions for its expression through individuals. While Hobbes presented a static vision of political power on the basis of human nature, the nonconformists put forth a progressive vision of political development toward a divine ideal. Some anticipated the imminent appearance of God in the world while others regarded the heavenly city as necessarily remote from the political realm. The voluntary embrace of truth that was fundamental to their understanding of Christianity required this distinction. The political covenant however, required active oversight of the execution of political power. The purpose of the state – no longer merely the monarchy – was to ensure the well being of the commonwealth. Its failure to do so was a misuse of power and a violation of the divine covenant.

Chapter Six: Restoration, Reconciliation and Renewed Repression

*The arguments for and against toleration changed significantly with the new institutional context of the Restoration and the reestablishment of Anglican hegemony. The dominant Anglican discourse presented religious homogeneity as essential to social cohesion and political stability. This political argument for religious uniformity set the terms of the toleration debate largely in *raison d'état* rather than in the rights language employed during the revolutionary decades. The Act of Uniformity effectively established Anglican hegemony and relegated dissenting groups – many of whom supported the idea of a state church – to an oppressed minority status. Protestant political identity and anti-Catholic rhetoric became powerful tools in challenging Anglican control over religion. Fear of Catholicism, and interest in preserving Protestant dominance ultimately motivate a coalition in support of limited religious toleration. Acceptance of religious pluralism comes about through the Anglican majority's recognition of the failure of coercion to create uniformity, and their desire for dissenters' support in restraining the power of the monarch.*

With the Restoration of the monarchy, the toleration debates turn from the question of the necessity or legitimacy of the state church to the limits of pluralism within an established Church. Who should be tolerated and to what degree was it possible to expand religious practice without diluting the authority of the church? Furthermore, what might be the consequences of excluding particular groups from the state church? If the church were a vital source of discipline and socialization exclusion could be more detrimental to the social order than a broadly tolerant national church. These questions drew considerable public commentary, especially from the clergy, as Charles II took the throne.

Monarchical power was also a critical issue during this period, and the question of religion continued to be central to the struggle between Parliament and the king. Contrary to earlier historiography of the Restoration, the works of Tim Harris (1987, 1993), and Gary de Krey (1993, 1995), demonstrate the persistence of religious and ideological divisions, and a precarious balance of power between Parliament and the king during the

1660s and 1670s. According to de Krey, unresolved tensions in the Restoration settlement brought the country to the brink of another crisis by the late 1670s (1995:55). Both de Krey and Harris challenge earlier characterization of the period either as a general retreat from political activism in favor of spiritual or economic pursuits (Hill 1975, Walzer 1974), or as a continuation of the movement toward participatory politics, with the Whigs picking up where the Levellers left off (Ashcraft 1986). The former view contributed to the erroneous perception within the social science literature that the heightened religious passions of the mid seventeenth century were an ephemeral consequence of economic turmoil and social dislocation. Harris demonstrates that there was not significant discontinuity between the Protectorate and the Restoration in terms of popular political engagement. Nor did religious dissidents fade quietly into the past; the sects grew in number during the 1660s and 1670s and by the 1680s represented 15-20% of the London population.¹⁹⁸

Charles II assumed the throne with the promise to recognize “a liberty to tender consciences.” In his famous *Breda Declaration* he proclaimed, “No man shall be disquieted or called into question for differences of opinion in matter of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom.” He was ready “to consent to such an Act of Parliament as upon mature deliberation shall be offered to us for the full granting that indulgence.” Yet despite these reassuring words the first decade of Charles II’s reign saw the deprivation of more than two thousand clergy – ninety were affected by the 1604

¹⁹⁸ Harris argues that the 1676 census was designed to make it appear that dissent was exhausted. The census records 1 in 12 Londoners as nonconformists, a gross underestimation in Harris’s view. Early 18th century estimates put nonconformists at about 15-20 percent of London population and Harris argues that the number during Charles II’s reign was likely to have been higher still. (p. 65)

Canons under James I – and significant increase in legal repression of nonconformity. By 1662 thousands of nonconformists were in prison and the rights of both Catholics and nonconformists were highly curtailed. Long-standing economic incentives for people to turn in their neighbors for using the wrong Bible or failing to attend church were revived,¹⁹⁹ and the Commons Committee considered restoring the law under which heretics were burned at the stake three times before 1680.

Religious dissidents were blamed for the war and continued to be associated with social unrest, to a degree that some historians argue was out of proportion to their actual threat. Nonconformists and their sympathizers were outvoted in Parliament, as intolerant conservatives predominated both within Parliament and in many localities.²⁰⁰ Between 1661-65, Parliament enacted a set of punitive measures against religious dissenters known as the Clarendon Code²⁰¹ intended to reestablish the supremacy of the Anglican Church, and neutralize the political power of the nonconformists. The *Corporation Act* (1661) required all public officials to take Anglican Communion, effectively excluding Catholics and Nonconformists from such positions. The *Act of Uniformity* (1662) made use of the *Book of Common Prayer* compulsory in religious services and *The Conventicle Act* (1664), aimed specifically at the gathered churches, forbade meetings of more than five people who were not related. *The Five Mile Act* (1665) took an even more aggressive step to shut down nonconformist communities by banning nonconformist ministers from

¹⁹⁹ One third of the estate appropriated from nonconformist would go to the person who reported him/her. Many petty local squabbles were played out through betrayal of nonconformity to the authorities.

²⁰⁰ Nicholas Tyacke, "The Legalization of Dissent, 1571-1719," in *From Persecution to Toleration*. Grell, Israel and Tyacke (eds.). New York: Oxford University Press 1991, p. 32.

²⁰¹ The statutes were named for Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and chief minister to Charles II. Clarendon did not support the laws but was instrumental in their enforcement.

within five miles of incorporated towns or the place of their former livings and forbidding them to teach.

This period during which persecution of Catholics and Protestant dissenters reached unprecedented levels²⁰² also saw the deposition of the king and establishment of a new form of monarchy. The monarch was chosen and subsequently constrained to reflect the dominant religion of the English nation. Prior to taking the throne, William and Mary were presented with a declaration of thirteen positive rights reserved to the people, proven and established through tradition. Both the rights themselves and the power of the people to declare them – their right to claim particular rights – were justified on the basis of a tradition that included the *Magna Charta* and the 1628 *Petition of Right*. After more than half a century of grounding political innovation in the ancient constitution, the terms of government were stipulated in a legal document that limited the exercise of power and established the Protestant nation as the source of sovereignty.²⁰³

The *Declaration of Rights*, as many scholars have observed, was not a claim to natural rights;²⁰⁴ it drew its authority from tradition and identity. In keeping with the Anglican justification for state power, reason and the effectiveness of practice were the measure of a particular political order. Truth was an unstable ground for political

²⁰² John Marshall (2006) demonstrates that propaganda and persecution of dissenters was worst in the 1680s. According to Mark Goldie more Catholic martyrs were created in England in 1679 than any year since the Spanish Armada.

²⁰³ For an excellent analysis of the Declaration of Rights and the institutional changes wrought by the Glorious Revolution see Schwoerer, Lois. *The Declaration of Rights, 1689*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

²⁰⁴ Michael Zuckert (1998) and Lee Ward (2004) for example present the Declaration of Independence as an historical first for its claim to natural rights. A discourse of natural rights was certainly available to justify the Declaration of Rights but its entwinement with religion made it much more divisive that it was in the American colonies, many of which were established in resistance to Anglican hegemony.

arrangements as there was no means of verifying particular claims or establishing their authority with disbelievers. Instead, the terms of government were grounded in what was common among people across divisions of belief and philosophical commitment. A shared history, common religiosity and interest in public peace to enable private pursuits are the rhetorical terms through which the English nation reconciled its religious conflict. The state, which grew through propagation and control over religion to be central to individual experience of political power, is reestablished as a facilitator of private life rather than as the arbiter of private actions.

Religious conflict culminated in the legal institution of popular sovereignty and accountable government through the *Declaration of Rights*²⁰⁵ presented to William and Mary as they took the throne in 1688 and passed by Parliament in 1689.²⁰⁶ The *Act of Toleration* (1689), passed by Parliament a few months later, was not the instantiation of freedom of conscience it became in liberal self-mythology. It was an acknowledgement of the practical limits on religious conformity in a society where the voluntary nature of religious commitment was a fundamental aspect of political identity. The Protestant

²⁰⁵ The full title of the act is *An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown*.

²⁰⁶ Geopolitical concerns were certainly a major factor in James II's exclusion from the throne, although these alliances were also drawn along religious lines. William originally sought friendly relations with James II, whom he was to replace with James II's Protestant daughter Mary as king of England. After James's refusal to join the League of Augsburg, an alliance against France, William began to court favor with English Protestants through public disapproval of James II's religious policies. An open letter to the English people prompted negotiations between Protestant politicians concerned about James' overt Catholicism that resulted in an armed invasion of England by William. William was formally invited to invade by the "Immortal Seven," a bipartisan group made up of the Earls of Danby, Shrewsbury, and Devonshire; Vidcount Lumley; Henry Compton, Bishop of London; Edward Russell and Henry Sydney. William landed in England with a large Dutch army pledging to maintain the liberties of England and the Protestant religion.

narrative through which the monarchy cultivated a uniform political culture during the reign of Elizabeth I and James I created opportunities for people to resist the expansion of state regulation into previously unregulated areas of life and set terms that ultimately redefined the nature of monarchical power. The link between political membership and religious practice ultimately led to a redefinition of the origins and purpose of political power. The monarch was transformed from God's delegate or surrogate on earth, and the constituting force of the polity, to a symbol of the more fundamental covenant between God and his people. The state ceased to be an agent of religious uniformity charged with cultivating particular dispositions and care for the soul. It became instead, a means through which people might fulfill God's mission on earth in historical time.

As Gordon Schochet has argued, the *Act of Toleration*²⁰⁷ (1689) was in some respects a completion of the *Act of Uniformity* (1662), which reestablished the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the hegemony of the Church of England (1996). It was not an open embrace of diversity or even a commitment to toleration, much less to religious liberty. Rather, the *Act of Toleration*, in conjunction with the exclusion of James II and establishment of the Protestant faith as a condition of succession to the throne, was an acknowledgement of the ineffectiveness of persecution in securing either confessional homogeneity or political stability. Collectively these measures represent recognition that the unrestrained power of the monarch in matters of religion was a greater threat to the English nation than the subversive potential of nonconformity. They established the ascendance of Anglican Protestantism, and rooted a claim to popular sovereignty in the shared history and religious practice of the political community. But the *Act of Toleration*

²⁰⁷ The full title of the act is *An Act for Exempting Their Majesties' Protestant Subjects Dissenting from the Church of England from the Penalties of Certain Laws*.

also legally recognized religious pluralism by establishing terms through which religious dissenters might be incorporated as loyal members of the state without membership within the Church of England.²⁰⁸

The *Act of Uniformity* laid down terms of membership within the Church of England, that specifically excluded not only Independents and Dissenters but Presbyterians, who were both committed to an ideal of a national church and desired full incorporation. Much as Laud's policies had done in the decade prior to the English Revolution, the *Act of Uniformity* made Presbyterians a victim of a policy they supported. Exclusion of Dissenters from the church had the effect of broadening the embrace of resistance narratives developed by earlier generations in response to religious persecution. Presbyterians were once again forced to reconcile conflicting religious and political obligations. The spectacle of persecution also alarmed many republican-minded politicians and observers who regarded the religious authorization of state intrusion into people's homes, dispossession, and imprisonment, as a travesty of the ancient constitution.

Comprehension or Uniformity?

According to Schochet and Pocock in *Varieties of British Political Thought*, "The Restoration was haunted by the specter of the Regicide and by the fear that the religious, political and social upheavals of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate might return as well" (1994:173). The fear of civil unrest was not limited to Anglicans. Presbyterians,

²⁰⁸ Schochet argues that the Act of Toleration brought an end to the English Reformation by giving legal recognition to those who sought comprehension within the Church of England but could not conform with all of its established practices. The act removed the disabilities which led them to seek comprehension (1996:183).

who had long rejected religious pluralism as a recipe for social chaos, welcomed the return of the king and desired incorporation into the established church. Themes of Christian unity and reconciliation are common in pamphlets and petitions in the first years of the Restoration and there is a strong sense among both Anglicans and Presbyterians that commonality of faith was important to reconstituting civil peace.

Thomas Warmistry, for example, an Anglican divine, declared in *A Counterminne of Union*, that division from God was the source of discord among the various religious groups, “our reconciliation unto him, must be the foundation of our reconciliation and peace with one another; which cannot otherwise be comfortably obtained, nor firmly established” (1). He anticipates an end to “spiritual Tyranny” that comes from people impressing their consciences on others; the magistrate is the proper source of such rules. Peace within the church, he argued, is more important than the specifics of ceremony, which are best established by “Governours, as appeareth most conducive to edification and conversion” (3). Warminstry invokes Calvin to claim that charity, understood as mutuality, proceeds from faith and liberty proceeds from charity. He suggests that the conflicts within the church be set aside and emphasis be placed on points of commonality. Christian love is the ultimate frame of collective membership and members of the church have a duty to embrace not only their own needs but those “of Papists, of Turkes, of Jewes, of Heathens” as well:

It is a very great mistake in reforming of things in the Church, to go as far as we can, from those that are strangers or enemies to the truth... We should ask ourselves some times the question, *Quota pars mundi sumus*: how great a part of the World we are. And not let such a valew upon our selves as if all the rest of the World must

be left to perish for our satisfaction (3).²⁰⁹

Thomas Swadlin, another Anglican divine who wrote elsewhere of the suffering of his fellows under the Protectorate, was far more pessimistic about the prospects of comprehension with Presbyterians. Writing in 1657, before the Restoration, his tract, *Whether It be better to turn Presbyterian, Romane, Or, to continue what I am, Catholique in Matter of Religion*, presents his belief in episcopacy and the *Book of Common Prayer* as essential to his religion and declares that whatever Christian affection might join him to Presbyterians, he was, “resolved never to be of their communion on *earth*. The obstacles to unity with papists, by contrast, were far less insurmountable.

Presbyterians as a group were never supporters of toleration and generally welcomed a state church as long as it would include their religious practices. Parker, who was discussed earlier, is one example of a virulently anti-tolerant position. Others were less inclined to dismiss claims of conscience as opportunistic but still regarded toleration as unworkable. John Corbet, for example, argued in 1660 that religious pluralism was anathema to the spirit of the English nation, “which is free, eager, jealous, apt to animosities and jealousies, besides that, it hath ever a strong propension to Uniformity.” A comprehensive uniformity, in his view, was essential to political unity both because a common church communion would cultivate a spirit of charity that would offset these natural tendencies and because religious divisions would encourage competition. Toleration presumed a dominant group and if this group was perceived as a burden or a threat to the establishment neither the established religion nor the minority group would

²⁰⁹ Thomas Warmistry, D.D., *A Countermine of Union to the Jesuites Myne of Division, Whereby they Contrive the Blasting of the World of Mercy, and the Return of a Flood of Ruine and Desolation upon this Church and Nation* (1660).

be at peace:

supposeth the party tolerated to be a burden, especially if conceived dangerous to the way established, and commonly hold no longer than mere necessity compels; and consequently neither party take themselves to be safe, the one always fearing to lose its authority, the other its liberty.

Corbet “proves” that the general interest of Protestantism was better served by the unity of the “Episcopal and Presbyterian parties” than by granting preference to “the Contracted and Dividing Interest of one Party” (Image 72).²¹⁰

While there was some consensus between Presbyterians and Anglicans about the necessity of a national religious community, the specific requirements of membership were highly contested. The 1660s saw renewed debates about matters indifferent (adiaphora), and while advocates of comprehension on both sides argued that there was general doctrinal agreement between Presbyterians and Anglicans the distribution of authority within the church government proved an obstacle to easy reconciliation. The condition of re-ordination of Presbyterian ministers was a breaking point for many Presbyterian clergy, whose chief objection to the Anglican Church was its hierarchical structure.²¹¹ Anglicans, on the other hand, regarded Presbyterians as king killers who manipulated religious claims to gain political power. Both groups opposed religious

²¹⁰ Corbet, John. *The interest of England in the matter of religion the first and second parts: unfolded in the solution of three questions*. (1661). Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. Accessed through Early English Books On-line.

²¹¹ See for example, Humfrey, John. *The Question of Re-Ordination, Whether, and how, a Minister Ordained by Presbytery, may take Ordination also by the Bishop?* (1661). The importance of the issue is indicated by his follow up tract, *A second discourse about re-ordination being an answer to two or three books come out against this subject, in behalf of the many concern'd at this season, who for the sake of their ministry, and upon necessity, do yield to it, in defence of their submission* (1662). Humfrey initially regarded reordination as a matter of indifferency but he was persuaded of his error by the tract *A Letter to a Friend*, R.A. who premised his argument against reordination on equality among priests. The act of reordination implies the superiority of bishops under divine law, which in his view was incorrect.

dissidents however, and saw separatism as a serious threat to political stability.

As the Anglican Church re-established its supremacy, it was confronted with the questions not only of who should be included and how broadly religious practice should be specified, but of who ultimately held authority over such decisions. The monarch held formal power over the church and Anglican bishops had been allied with the throne historically. James I's warning, "no Bishop, no King" had proven true in the reverse as well, and Anglican divines had fared poorly under Parliamentary rule.²¹² Yet Charles II's commitment to Anglican supremacy was shaky at best. He ultimately wished to protect Catholics, but widespread anti-Catholic sentiment motivated him to include Protestant dissidents in his efforts to alleviate the burdens of the Clarendon Code.

Changing terms of toleration: From God to the state

The Anglican premise that where the truth was unknown the state was free to establish religious practice, and the persistent perception that political stability required confessional homogeneity, set the terms of Anglican anti-tolerance largely in reason of state. As the Anglican discourse reestablished hegemony, toleration advocates pitched their arguments in the same terms in effort to prove the faulty logic of their opponents. Advocates of toleration – and in some cases of liberty of conscience – argued that intolerance and persecution did not improve the safety, order or stability of the state. Advocates and opponents of toleration alike accepted the need for a common purpose

²¹² Thomas Swadlin describes "The suffering of the Clergy of the Church of England sequestered, plundered and imprisoned in several gaols." Their wives and children were turned out and denied food without bribes. Anglican divines were supported by alms from Royalists during the Interregnum, when they were not allowed to maintain ministries.

among members of the society, and the preservation of civil peace from both internal and external threats. The sources of commonality and the best strategy for minimizing those threats however remained matters of dispute.

Arguments for separation of church and state come from new sources during this period, and some prior advocates of separation find new ways of advocating liberty of conscience. Restoration arguments for toleration and religious liberty are much more commonly framed in terms of civil peace than those of the previous decades, largely because the Anglican opposition to toleration is grounded in reason of state. Most Anglicans rejected the appeal to truth that prevailed during the civil war period as justification for political arrangements, and the relationship between church and state was well established as a matter of human discretion rather than divine necessity. Presbyterians during that period had shared the Anglicans' objective of a state church but not their justification for it. The dual interest in restructuring church government and purging the papal elements from religious practice that guided the Presbyterian agenda relied on an absolute sense of right derived from the scripture. While Presbyterians sought to bring the church more in line with scriptural 'truth,' Anglicans justified the state church on the basis of a divinely ordained collective and indifferency.

Given the necessity of presenting their concerns in terms that addressed the Anglican framing of the issue, advocates of toleration ceased to emphasize truth in their arguments. In line with the Anglican justification of the church on the basis of the particular character and history of the English people toleration advocates premised their challenges to it in terms of English cultural uniqueness and the impact of the arrangement on collective well-being. In some cases, rather than claim that persecution was anti-

Christian (as many previous arguments had done) toleration advocates presented it as against the concept of the nation itself. They argued that the narrowly drawn terms of membership within the Anglican Church sowed sedition by excluding people from the fundamental benefits of political membership. The Quaker pamphlet, *Christian Tolleration*, for example, argued that religious persecution denied people the most basic aspects of political life. Imprisonment and banishment for worshiping God left people with little choice but to defy the law. Sir Peter Pett also argues in this vein. His 1661 tract, *A Discourse Concerning Liberty of Conscience*, characterized imposition on spiritual liberties as an intrusion so personal it could only invoke revolt.²¹³ Maintaining state control over people's consciences thus required a concomitant use of force in order to prevent rebellion: "For he that takes away a feather out of a mans hat, is obliged in interest to take away his sword from his side" (19).

Pett advocated an inclusive national church and toleration for dissenters on the grounds that it would "conduce to the peace and safety of the English Nation." He characterizes the English Nation as one in which people hold both spiritual and civil liberty in high regard. Liberty of conscience would prevent civil wars because there were so many sects in England. Much as Voltaire would observe upon visiting England a century later, Pett argued that two religions would encourage conflict but the number and diversity of religious organization in England would prevent any one from trying to gain ascendancy: "Their severall animosities will keep them from joyning together against any one that doth not invade their liberty in generall." In addition to being the best way to

²¹³ R.T., *A Discourse Concerning Liberty of Conscience, In which are contain'ds Proposals about what liberty in this kind is now politically expedient to be given and severall reasons to shew how much the peace and welfare of the nation is concern'd therein* (1661)

create a common interest among disparate groups, toleration was the best way to ensure loyalty to the king. If the king extended toleration, his enemies, whether internal or external, would not be able to manipulate religion in support of their quest for dominance. Toleration thus avoids the divisions that prevent collective power from restraining would be usurpers.

The English equal concern for spiritual and civil liberties contrasts sharply with the lack of such sentiment in “Popish countries” where people are obliged to be servile to the Bishops. Pett casts “this propension of the English not onely to Religion, but vehemence in it” as national character, “bred lately among us since the introduction of Protestancy. The passion among the sects is not exceptional but a quality that defines the English nation, one that Pett presents in positive contrast to the servility and oppression of those who endure papal rule. This character of the English, and the interests of the various parties in conflict must be taken into account when considering how to best achieve peace and stability. The prospects for achieving uniformity through persecution in the manner of the Spanish Inquisition, he assures his reader, are quite poor. Top down imposition of conformity will not work where people have grown invested in their own understanding of religious practice.

John Owen likewise dismisses the notion that conformity can easily be achieved by imposing disincentives to continuing in one’s own practice.²¹⁴ He agrees with Pett’s assertion that “for many men their spirituall liberties are as considerable as part of their civill”. He rejects the claims that Presbyterians had been nothing more than “aemulous”²¹⁵

²¹⁴ *Animadversions on a treatise intituled Fiat lux, or, A guide in differences of religion, between papist and Protestant, Presbyterian and independent by a Protestant.* (1662).

²¹⁵ ambitiously desiring to equal, emulate or surpass; contentious.

Plebeians” who sought power over and through religion. The first reformers were people of status and learning who had much to lose by challenging the establishment. Likewise, the prophets of the Hebrew scripture undertook God’s message of reform at considerable personal risk out of conviction rather than advantage seeking. Those who, (like Hobbes although the target of his criticism is John Vincent Canes, a Catholic convert and Franciscan),²¹⁶

Fancy men in all great undertakings to be steered by desire of applause and honour, are exceeding incompetent judges of those actions which zeal for the glory of God, love to the Truth, sense of their duty to the Lord Jesus Christ, and compassion for the souls of others, do lead men unto, and guide them in: and such will the last Day manifest the Reformation traduced to have been (121).

Owen’s purpose was to defend Protestantism against Catholic criticism but he also affirmed the power of commitment to truth in motivating the actions of individuals. He remained a Presbyterian despite enticement by Clarendon to conform to the Anglican Church in exchange for restoration of his status. Owen insisted on a broadly comprehensive church that afforded full liberty of worship to those who affirmed the doctrine of the Church of England.²¹⁷

There is also a pronounced legalistic turn in the discourse as opponents of the Clarendon Code interrogate its violation of what they take to be the ancient English constitution. The *Magna Charta* figures prominently in these appeals as the basic law of

²¹⁶ Cane wrote in defense of the Catholic cause, celebrating the unity of Catholicism against the extreme divisions within Protestantism: *Fiat Lux: or a General conduct to a right understanding and charity in the great Combustions and Broils about Religion here in England, betwixt Papist and Protestant, Presbyterian and Independent. To the end that Moderation and Quietness may at length happily ensue after so serious Tumults in the Kingdom* (1661).

²¹⁷ Owen actively sought passage of the Toleration Act in 1667. He sought nonconformist unity with Richard Baxter, and appreciated the indulgence of Charles II. He wrote a remonstrance against persecution to new England Congregationalists in 1669, and a tract challenging Samuel Parker’s 1670 screed against toleration.

the English nation from which all of its various branches stem. Within this discourse there is an emerging distinction between the power of the state to restrict particular actions and its power to designate their meaning. The potential consequences of particular actions in public harm would properly bring them under the state's purview, but the ancient constitution also guaranteed people freedom from intrusion, and procedural protection where intrusion was warranted by an individual's alleged harm to the rest of society. Those who took up this line of argument in response to the Clarendon Code – John Locke, most prominent among them – asserted that the state should not have a monopoly over interpretation of actions.

A Quaker pamphlet denouncing the *Conventicle Act* illustrates this emergent legalism in challenges to religious persecution that distinguished between regulation of particular behavior and regulation of its intent. *Christian Tolleration* (1664) affirms the legitimacy of state measures to prevent sedition and insurrection. It then proceeds to trace the definition of insurrection inherent in the act, and legal restraints on the exercise of state power. Restraint of meetings among five or more people violated the common law protections of English people and the arrest and dispossession that accompanied prosecution under the law were a further breach of this tradition of rights that defined the English nation. The author argues that Quaker meetings, and perhaps those of other sects as well, are clearly not unlawful because they are not disguising insurrection as religious worship. The law restricts 'unlawful' assemblies, which it further describes as seditious and oriented toward insurrection. The assembly itself is not only protected in the common law tradition, the protestant faith requires meetings to worship God. Only meetings with the specific characteristics designated in the law can be restricted. Denial of this right of

assembly outside of the Church of England is unlawful because it prejudices people without the procedures that are their due both legally and by force of tradition.

The connection between spiritual and civil liberties becomes a point of commonality between Anglican advocates of a uniform church and Parliamentarians who sought constitutional limitations on monarchical power. Sir Peter Pett's argument in *A Discourse Concerning Liberty of Conscience* in 1661, that spiritual and civil liberties are inextricable, prevails among members of Parliament who were sympathetic to the plight of dissidents but were primarily concerned with institutional restraint of the monarchy. Pett declares that those who "would devest any of their spirtiuall liberties, do alarm them with just causes of fear about losing civil liberties by the same hands" (15). Drawing upon the example of Romish tyranny with respect to religion, he argues that those who would impose religion upon people would not stop at restricting any civil liberty under its auspices. Destruction of spiritual liberty inevitably encroaches upon civil liberties, and weakens people's ability to resist further tyranny:

So that the totall destroyers of spirituall liberty shew that part of the civill is at their mercy. And if they are able to take away part of mens civill liberties, they are by that means in a better capacity to take away another; just as he that is able to take away one limb from a mans body, is the more able to take away another, because by the losse of that a man hath the less strength to defend himself against a further assault (17).

This construction of English identity in terms of religious commitment and jealous guarding of civil liberties, particularly the articulation of these qualities as points of distinction from Roman Catholicism, took on greater power as anti-Catholic sentiment increased over the next two decades. The positive qualities of toleration and constitutional liberties were persuasive points of contrast with the spectacle of popish persecution in France, and fear of James II's Catholic sympathies led many Anglicans to

break their traditional alliance with the throne (Marshall 2006, Tyacke 1991).

Retreat of the Nonconformists

Quakers to some degree became the torchbearers for the cause of liberty of conscience developed first by other separatist sects. In 1659 Richard Hubberthorn, an early Quaker preacher, denounced Anabaptists for abandoning the cause of truth and justice in *An Answer to a Declaration put forth by the general consent of the People called Anabaptists, in and about the City of London*. He criticizes them for adopting a beseeching tone with the Cavalier Parliament rather than presenting a “Vindication of that Truth and Cause once Contended for” (1). Hubberthorn declares that the Quakers stand above the obsequious sects who promise complete obedience and “walk in that Righteousness which must establish the Nation”.

Hubberthorn’s text demonstrates the dissension among the sects as the monarchy was reestablished and Parliament consolidated its reaction against them. Anabaptists, in his account, construct themselves against Quakers: “there are none more opposite to their [Quaker] irregular practices then we are, nor are there any that they have exprest more contradiction to in matters of Religion then against us,” but pledge to support any sect in their “just liberty, while they live moral’y honest and peaceable in the Nation” (5). Hubberthorn draws upon many earlier arguments for toleration in his advocacy of full toleration for all people, whether Christian or not. He shares the Anabaptists plea for liberty but condemns them for not standing in unity with the other sects. They betray the common cause of Nonconformists by opportunistically presenting the Quakers as the worst of the lot, the true disrupters of civil peace.

Another Quaker, Robert Barclay, describes the division among nonconformists and scapegoating of Quakers during the Restoration. The nonconformists by his account left the public cause of religious truth to the Quakers, “for the most part [the Nonconformists] durst not peep out in these times of Persecution, while these innocent people [Quakers] stood bold and faithful.” As he writes in 1675, the Nonconformists are uniting in “a joynt Confederacy (notwithstanding all the former Janglings and Contentions among themselves) to render us [Quakers] odious, seeking unjustly to wrest our Doctrine and Words, as if they were inconsistent both with Christianity and with civil society” (4).²¹⁸ Experience shows, he argues, that Quakers are peaceable toward the king and faithful to God, and that it is “most agreeable both to Divine Truth and to Humane Policy, to allow every one to serve God, according to their Consciences.” He appeals to the king’s experience of oppression as grounds for rejecting persecution altogether:

Thou hast tasted of prosperity and adversity; thou know’st what it is to be banished thy Native Countrey, to be overruled, as well as to rule and sit upon the Throne; and being oppressed, thou hast reason to know how hateful the Oppressor is, both to God and man. If after all these Warnings and Advertisements, thou dost not turn unto the Lord withal thy Heart, but forget him, who remembered thee in thy distress, and give thyself to follow Lust and Vanity, surely great will be thy condemnation.

Echoing Milton, Barclay claims that the republican spirit of true Christians, of free Christians, renders the king’s government more honorable than slavish, papist obedience to a state church.

The Restoration Crisis

²¹⁸ 1675 – The 1673 bill that brought relief from persecution for many Protestants specifically excluded Quaker and Baptists.

The “persecuting episcopalianism”²¹⁹ that prevailed throughout the 1660s was nearly overturned in 1667. Gary de Krey characterizes the toleration debates between 1667 and 1672 as a revival of concern with liberty of conscience that had been central to the question of religion during the English Revolution.²²⁰ Debate about church settlement was renewed in parliament, among the ministry, in the press and on the streets before the *Conventicle Act* expired in 1669. Comprehension and toleration were both on the table as viable alternatives to persecution. Stephen Pincus referred to 1667 as a moment of ideological crisis sparked by Clarendon’s impeachment and the Second Anglo-Dutch War. De Krey is echoed by Jonathan Scott in arguing that the disruption in 1667 unsettled many of the premises of the Restoration, accentuating institutional fault lines that would result in a “Restoration Crisis” ten years later (de Krey 1995:55, Scott 2002).

A comprehension bill was drafted in 1667 that would have recognized Presbyterian ordination and relaxed the requirements of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Another proposed bill would have granted Protestants who could not be comprehended the right to practice their own religion, but bar them from holding public office. Religious persecution would have ceased but membership within the church would have remained a condition of full political incorporation. The king supported the proposed bills but the Commons rejected them, fearing civil unrest if dissenters were tolerated. Parliament and the king were once again in opposition, this time on opposite sides of the toleration issue.

²¹⁹ Tyacke (1991).

²²⁰ De Krey identifies four arguments in the literature on conscience from 1667-1672: 1. Natural law (Owen, Nye and Humfrey), 2. Pragmatism (Humfrey, Bethel), 3. Natural law and historical right (Wolseley, Penn), 4. Christian and Hebrew imagery. He objects to Ashcraft’s treatment of arguments for conscience as a single appeal (1986); restoration nonconformists were as divided by religious persuasion and political perspective as the puritans and sectarians of the 1640s and 1650s.

After 1667, the issue of religious toleration became entwined with the question of monarchical power on both sides of the debate. The monarch's apparent papist sympathies and efforts to mitigate the effect of Parliament's persecution of nonconformity undermined the traditional alliance between the Anglican Church and the monarch. Charles II did not share the Anglican vision of a protestant culture and was regarded as an unreliable head of the church by many Anglican divines. His efforts to undermine the *Act of Uniformity* through indulgences threatened the Anglican agenda and exacerbated existing tensions within Parliament. The Anglican clergy, who had largely endorsed monarchical absolutism before the revolution, turned to Parliament for protection. Their acceptance of royal supremacy over religious matters depended on his agreement with the church.²²¹ In justification of their tacit rejection of the king's stewardship of the church, Archbishop Sheldon declared parliamentary laws to be the enactment of the king's will: "His Majesty's sense is no otherwise known than by his public laws, and by them, therefore, we are only to be guided in our duties" (Beddard 1979:170). The king, whose body had been rendered dual in the previous century's political thought, was now endowed with two wills, one private and subject to error, one public, legal and incontrovertible as enacted by parliament.

The political question of the proper authority for determining membership and social practice intersected with the desire of certain groups to gain relief from repression. Quakers, for example, were widely denounced as licentious and morally depraved.²²²

²²¹ For a more elaborate discussion of this dynamic see Howard Nenner, "The Later Stuart Age," in *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, by J.G.A Pocock, Gordon Schochet and Lois Schwoerer.

²²² See John Marshall. *John Locke Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*. P. 112; Reay, Barry. "Popular Hostility Toward Quakers in Mid-Seventeenth Century England,"

Their suffering under the Protectorate led them to support Charles II and he interceded on the behalf of more prominent members of the sect to grant relief from the Clarendon Code. The Quakers grew progressively more abstracted from political concerns in response to persecution, and by the late 1660s their focus was on private spiritual development rather than progressive political change. Despite the democratic nature of their organization and opposition to hierarchy, they supported whoever would leave them in peace. William Penn, for example, invoked the English tradition of political rights in his defense against charges of rioting for holding a Quaker meeting in the streets,

If these ancient fundamental laws which relate to liberty and property, and are not limited to particular persuasions in matters of religion, must not be indispensably maintained and observed, who can say he hath right to the coat on his back? Certainly our liberties are openly to be invaded, our wives to be ravished, our children slaved, our families ruined and our estates led away in triumph, by every sturdy beggar and malicious informer, as their trophies but our pretended forfeits for conscience' sake.²²³

But while the monarch had violated these “fundamental laws” before the wars, now Parliament was the primary agent of religious oppression. Penn found greater protection for himself and his community through his relationship with the king than through the institutions intended to preserve such rights.

Further legal measures were taken to contain religious dissent in 1670. A second *Conventicle Act* relaxed the penalties applied by the first but targeted the communities and their leadership rather than individual believers. Fines were applied more arbitrarily and with less procedural protection. People could be held responsible for violations of

in *Social History*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Oct. 1980) pp. 387-407; and Greaves, Richard. *Enemies Under his Feet: Radicals and Nonconformists in Britain, 1664-1677*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.

²²³ Quoted in John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*. (2006, 107).

their associates and the standards of evidence necessary to convict were lower than customary. In an effort to undermine sympathy for dissent and galvanize the popular support necessary to prosecute conventiclers, the Act imposed fines on public officials for withholding evidence and created financial incentives for people to turn in their neighbors. The exercise of broad police powers in the invasion of homes and dispossession of the accused through summary convictions outraged many people who saw protection from such encroachment as inviolable aspects of England's legal tradition. Andrew Marvell, for example, declared the 1670 act to be "the quintessence of arbitrary malice." In 1689, Presbyterian minister John Howe further characterized it as devastating to the English constitution,

Our Magna Carta was torn in pieces; the worst and most infamous of mankind, at our own expense, hired to accuse us; multitudes of perjuries committed; convictions made without a jury, and without any hearing of the persons accused; penalties inflicted; goods rifled; estates seized and embezzled; houses broken up; families disturbed, often at most unseasonable hours of the night, without any cause or shadow of a cause, if only a malicious villain could pretend to suspect a meeting there.²²⁴

By 1673 the opinion in the House of Commons shifted, without a change in personnel. A bill was passed "for ease of His Majesty's Protestant subjects, Dissenters from the Church of England." The bill, and the changed attitude toward toleration in the House, were due to fear of Catholicism and the monarchy's assertion of power over church membership. It was a response to the 1672 *Declaration of Indulgence*, through which Charles II granted toleration to both Dissenters and Catholics. While animosity toward Catholics and fear of dissenters were not absent from the debates, the issue was reframed in terms of monarchical discretion over penal statutes – a power the House

²²⁴ Quoted in Mark Goldie, "Conventicles Act (1664, 1670)," in (2006:359).

rejected. Parliament forced Charles II to revoke the Declaration of Indulgence by leveraging funding of the Anglo-Dutch War, and reasserted Parliamentary control over the issue of religious conformity by extending limited comprehension (Tyacke 1991). The 1673 bill excluded Quakers and Baptists. The *Test Act*, passed in the same session banned Catholics from public office.²²⁵

While the Anglican Church turned to Parliament to defend its exclusive rights over public religion, challenges to religious intolerance were being developed within Parliament that drew upon the liberal framing of government during the revolutionary period. These arguments were grounded in alternative narratives of political membership that understood political cohesion to proceed from a variety of common interests served by political stability and peace. Among these shared concerns were economic prosperity, common religiosity (if not common practice), and an ‘ancient’ tradition of law and political rights. Religious intolerance was increasingly presented as a threat to civil peace and prosperity. John Locke and his patron, the Earl of Shaftsbury, were pivotal in reframing the issue of religious intolerance from a necessary means of securing peace to a source of state excess and civil disruption. Locke’s participation in the toleration debate from the beginning of the Restoration through the legalization of dissent in 1689 is emblematic of the larger shift in the discourse. The *Act of Toleration* is largely possible through a change in the Anglican vision of the political community and its relationship to the state. The anti-tolerationists had sought a protestant community kept in line by religion over which the monarch held full discretion. During the 1670s and 1680s, these

²²⁵ The Test Act was the last statute imposing civil disabilities for religious beliefs to be repealed in England. Catholics were prevented from holding public office until 1829 and Jews were not fully incorporated until 1890.

undisciplined masses are rhetorically transformed into a community that coheres through Christian charity, a common tradition, and a shared interest in peace.

John Locke's *First Tract on Government*, written in 1660 in response to Edward Bagshaw's *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in religious Worship* (1660), demonstrates considerable anxiety about the politically disruptive potential of spiritually authorized resistance to civil law. Bagshaw sought freedom for Christians to choose whether or not to conform to the national church on the basis of indifference. He argued that Christian magistrates could no more impose upon the spiritual practices of Christians than they could upon those of Jews or Muslims. Coercion in spiritual matters had precedent neither in the scripture, nor in the actions of Christ or his apostles. In his response to Bagshaw, Locke sounds more like Parker and Rutherford than the champion of religious toleration he was to become as he laments disputes over religion for the opportunities they avail the discontented to seek their own advantage. In the *Two Tracts* Locke welcomes the return of the monarch, and celebrates the law, its grounding in tradition and superiority in achieving a stable, prosperous and devout society:

I have not therefore the same apprehensions of liberty that I find some have or can think the benefits of it to consist in a liberty for men at pleasure to adopt themselves children of God, and from thence assume a title to inheritance here and proclaim themselves heirs of the world; not a liberty for ambition to pull down wellframed constitutions that out of its ruins they may build themselves fortunes; not a liberty to be Christians so as not to be subjects, nor such a liberty as is like to engage us in perpetual dissension and disorder. All the freedom I can wish my country or myself is to enjoy the protection of those laws which the prudence and providence of our ancestors established and the happy return of his majesty hath restored: a body of laws so well composed, that whilst this nation would be content only to be under them they were always sure to be above their neighbors, which forced from the world this constant acknowledgement, that we were not only the happiest state but the purest church of the latter age (121).²²⁶

²²⁶ John Locke (1660) *Two Tracts on Government*. (ed.) Phillip Abrams 1967.

Locke draws heavily on the justification for the ecclesiastical polity developed by Richard Hooker in the late sixteenth century. The authority of the civil magistrate was derived from God but its purpose was to establish and maintain civil peace. Divine law did function as a limit on what the magistrate might require of people but if indifference were a legitimate basis for claiming exemption to positive law, the magistrate would be rendered ineffective. Like Hooker, Locke argues that within the realm of indifference the magistrate is empowered to legislate for the good of the community and to maintain peace and security. Effectively, he claims that if things are not indifferent, but pronounced through scripture, then the source of authority is divine rather than civil law. If the realm of indifference were left entirely to the discretion of individual believers there would be no limit on the challenges conscience might pose to civil order, “there is no action so indifferent which a scrupulous conscience will not fetch with some consequence from Scripture and make a spiritual concernment” (140).

In response to Bagshaw’s claim that the Christian religion required worship to be “a free-will offering” that could only proceed from a person’s “inward conscience,” Locke distinguishes between the inner experience of worship and outward compliance with the requirements of the state. He agrees that coerced belief is meaningless; the inner worship of the heart that was the true requirement of religion was not realized by forcing conformity:

this worship, wholly silent and secret as it is, completely hidden from the eyes and observations of men, is neither subject to human laws, nor indeed capable of such a subjection. God who lays bare the most secret of the mind and who can alone either know the private deliberations of the mind or pass judgement upon them, is the only examiner of men’s hearts (214).

This distinction is not the basis for exempting people from public worship however. In

Locke's view, it merely sets a limit (or acknowledges an inherent limit) on the state's ability to coerce belief. Locke does not see the state as claiming to impose a true practice, nor as requiring acceptance of the correctness of particular practices by those upon whom they are imposed. People are free to consider the practices themselves in whatever light they wish, as long as they comply with the public requirement of their performance.

In the *Two Tracts* Locke argues that the magistrate can impose religious uniformity for peace and stability, not because it is a requirement of divine law or because it is the custodian of people's spiritual lives. His understanding of the state is consistent with that which had long prevailed in both the Anglican and nonconformist traditions. Its purpose was to create the conditions for spiritual pursuits, rather than to force a certain truth upon people. However, unlike the nonconformists, at this point Locke regarded religious uniformity as an important (or at least acceptable) tool in securing civil peace. Divine law prevented encroachment upon conscience but this merely restrained the state from forcing confession to particular doctrines. The Anglican Church's claim to indifferency was a buffer against truth claims, which Locke, like Hooker, regarded as the province of dangerous religious radicals.

The attribution of divinity to human ordinances, and claim that they were necessary for salvation was an imposition on conscience, but these were the strategies of the Puritans during the wars and of those who continued to claim the priority of their own consciences:

Imposing on conscience seems to me to be, the pressing of doctrines or laws upon the belief or practice of men as of divine original, as necessary to salvation and in themselves obliging the conscience, when indeed they are no other but the ordinances of men and the products of their authority (139).

The claim to know the truth had the potential to impose upon conscience but the

Anglican basis of church regulation in matters indifferent, the assertion that the church was a function of civil peace, cast the restraint of liberty as an unavoidable consequence of social life:

That supposing man naturally owner of an entire liberty and so much master of himself as to owe no subjection to any other but God alone (which is the freest condition we can fancy him in) it is yet the unalterable condition of society and government that every particular man must unavoidably part with this right to his liberty and entrust the magistrate with as full a power over all his actions as he himself hath, it being otherwise impossibly that anyone should be subject to the commands of another who retains the free dispose of himself, and is master of an equal liberty (125).

In his subsequent writings, Locke would follow the logic of the state as an agent of civil peace to a different conclusion with respect to religious toleration. The basic premises of his arguments for religious liberty in *Essay on Toleration* (1667) and *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) are not appreciably different from those on which he endorses the power of the magistrate to induce uniformity of religious practice in *Two Tracts*. In all three works, the emphasis on the state as the arbiter of public conflict drives his prescription with respect to religion. Within a few years, through the effects of the Clarendon Code and perhaps the influence of Shaftesbury and his experience in the American colonies,²²⁷ Locke saw intolerance and monarchical power as a more

²²⁷ Gordon Schochet suggests that Locke's experience in the American colonies changed his perspective on religious toleration. Witnessing different religious groups peacefully coexisting, even sharing the same churches, contributed to the shift in his assessment of the source and solution to religious conflict. In 1660, like Hobbes, he regarded people as requiring external discipline to prevent chaos, by 1667 he saw the effort to control religion as the source of social and political disharmony. "Toleration, Revolution and Judgment in the Development of Locke's Political Thought," in *Political Science*, Vol. 40, Number 1, July 1988. On the relationship between Shaftesbury and Locke, and for background on Locke generally see John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (1994). Marshall also suggests that individual moral inquiry might have become more important to Locke during the 1660s because of his own philosophical

significant threat to civil peace than religious heterodoxy. In the later work, he extends Hooker's logic of rendering the church fully in service to public life and conscience unreachable by the state to full separation of church and state akin to that endorsed by the Levellers in the 1640s.²²⁸

In the *Essay on Toleration* Locke begins to characterize toleration as a fundamental value to society. The state's role as an agent of civil peace limits its exercise of power to matters between people, rather than between people and god. While in the *Two Tracts* the distinction between conscience as a private matter and worship as public behavior justified state power in inducing outward conformity, in the *Essay* Locke understands religious worship as an extension of conscience. Worship, in the 1667 work, is "a thing wholly between God and me, and is of an eternall concernment above the reach and extend of politics, which are but for my well being in this world" (137). The magistrate can neither mediate people's relationship to God by controlling worship, nor exercise discretion over opinion in speculative matters. People's pursuit of moral understanding is their own.

Locke challenges the idea of monarchical absolutism implied by state control over religious practice with the English constitution. Any who believes that one person held

pursuits. The *Essay on Toleration* emphasizes the individual duty of moral inquiry and denies the possibility of achieving moral knowledge through custom and tradition (p. 63).²²⁸ There is an elaborate debate about the "two Lockes" that began with publication of Abram's edition of *Two Tracts* in 1967. Generally the Locke of the *Two Tracts* is regarded as a 'conservative' or even as 'authoritarian' although such contemporary terms are difficult to apply in a meaningful way without attention to context. Peter Laslett, Richard Ashcraft and Gordon Schochet emphasize the continuity between Locke's position and the mid seventeenth century revolutionary thought of the Levellers. Ashcraft attributes the change in Locke's position as a commitment to the 'ideology of dissent,' developed through the *Essay on Toleration* and the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in response to Samuel Parker.

“sole supreme and arbitrary power” over all things “forgot what country they were borne in, under what laws they live and certainly cannot but be obliged to declare Magna Charta, to be downe right heresie” (136). Echoing the arguments of the Levellers and Baptists two decades earlier, Locke asserts that the magistrate’s power is limited by his divinely ordained purpose to preserve the lives of his subjects.

A number of toleration advocates defended the jurisdiction of the monarch over an established religion. Presbyterian John Humfrey, and Independent ministers John Owen and Philip Nye, for example regarded indulgence as tantamount to incorporation.²²⁹ The monarch’s sympathy toward the cause of their communities most likely disposed them toward accepting Charles II’s ecclesiastical power, but their desire for an established church was also consistent with the Presbyterian position throughout the seventeenth century. In an effort to reconcile their doctrinal commitment to ecclesiastical authority and exclusion from the state church Owen, Nye and Humfrey distinguished between the public sphere of religious practice and the private responsibility of conscience, much as Locke did in his *Two Tracts*. Religious matters are an inherently private concern, and each individual must be the judge of whether his or her own actions are in accord with God’s will. According to Owen, “Conscience is the judgment that a man maketh of himself and his actions, with reference to the future

²²⁹ Nye described the dissenters who worshipped under royal licensure as “fully comprehended” and Humfrey described the authorized conventicles as “having the Authority of the Supream Head of the Church, equally with the Parish Churches, they are manifestly constituted thereby parts of the Church National.” John Humfrey, *A Defense of the Proposition* (1668) and *The authority of the magistrate, about religion, discussed* (1672); Phillip Nye, *The lawfulness of the oath of supremacy*, p. 69. Quoted in de Krey, Gary, “Rethinking the Restoration: Dissenting Cases for Conscience, 1667-1672,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 1. (March 1995) pp. 53-83.

judgment of God.”²³⁰ Humfrey and Nye share this construction of conscience as the capacity for moral discrimination and sociability: “Every man must have a judgment or private discretion... in respect to his own actions: or else he acts as a *Bruite*.”²³¹ Charles Wolsely, a former Cromwell councilor and friend of Shaftsbury and Buckingham, shared this assessment of conscience as a critical aspect of humanity, “To say that a man is not to judge for himself [in religious matters] is to... change him from a rational Creature to a Bruit.”²³² William Penn considered individual accountability to God to be a “principall privilege of nature.”

Through the efforts of these excluded ministers to reconcile the conflict between their beliefs and the requirements of a political authority they accept as legitimate, the construction of conscience comes to resemble the modern understanding of the term. The characterization of conscience as an inner magistrate, as the capacity to develop moral judgment, was far less threatening to public order than the notion of an inner truth advanced by separatist as justification for religious liberty and engaged citizenship. While the concept of conscience asserted by Separatists evoked public fears of reckless disregard for political authority, the concept advanced by the Presbyterian ministers implied discipline and careful consideration of one’s actions with respect to the law. It is characterized as the capacity to obey the law and live peaceably in society. Perhaps more importantly, acting in accordance with conscience is construed as a universal moral obligation. Humfrey and Richard Baxter argue that the surrender of free exercise of conscience to either the prince or the priest is a sinful betrayal of personal accountability

²³⁰ Owen, John. *Indulgence and Toleration considered*, p. 527

²³¹ Owen, John. *Truth and innocence vindicated*, p. 377

²³² Sir Charles Wolsely, *Liberty of Conscience upon its true and proper Grounds* (1668) pp. 5-6, 44.

to God. Owen furthers this notion by arguing that Jesus freed men's consciences from all but the immediate authority of God.

Conscience in these arguments is the means through which godly citizens negotiate conflicting and absolute claims over their actions. Opponents of this view such as Samuel Parker, argue that an individual's ultimate responsibility must be to the law because legally empowered individual judgment would result in social and political chaos. His view on conscience grants priority to the state, while the Presbyterians and Independents see religion as the *sine quo non* of civil society. The concept of conscience as an "inner magistrate," through which sober minded citizens exercise moral judgment over the law, is consistent with Independent and Presbyterian visions of the established church. The godly should uphold the state/church authority and lead from within the church by the moral superiority of their actions.

The importance of this concept of conscience to the development of liberal political thought has been noted by a number of scholars. Michael Walzer, for example, described the Puritans as having constructed an "ideology of transition" that led the way to modernity through conscience and work (1974: 312). The concept of godliness can be understood as an intermediate position between an authoritarian state that acts as God's agent in the world to maintain political order because the fall left people without the capacity for internal discipline, and one in which sovereignty was born by the people and exercised through republican citizenship. The intermediate position of the Puritans regarded the state as a necessary force to maintain discipline among the reprobate so that the devout could pursue God's purpose in the world. Conscience developed from the capacity to conform with the commands of God's representatives to the capacity to

discern the true voice of God from the false.

The concept of conscience as a source of self-discipline and its moral priority over the magistrate's command is generally considered a Restoration phenomenon (Pincus and Houston, de Krey 1995). Gordon Schochet observes the importance of appeals to conscience during the English Civil Wars, but he regards the effect of this construction as limited to radical fringe groups. Pincus and Houston argue that the "conversion of the concept... [of conscience]... from a rationale for the prince's authority into a rationale for maintaining a strong personal boundary against any inappropriate exercise of authority" was a Presbyterian legacy, rather than one rooted in the English Revolution.²³³ The difference between Presbyterian invocation of conscience as a point of resistance in this situation and the use of conscience among the early separatists to claim a sphere of community autonomy from the state is that Presbyterians advocated control of the church by the state as long as it was the correct church. They feared the separation because conscience could not be relied upon as a source of political conformity among dissenters. This construal allowed those with a properly developed conscience to exercise moral objection to how power was wielded. These Presbyterians embraced narratives of resistance developed in the Elizabethan period because they were again without power to influence the operation of the church.

Presbyterian dissent was due to the group's exclusion from the state-church, rather than their rejection of its authority. Presbyterian arguments for toleration generally did not involve comprehensive critiques of the structure of power, as earlier pleas for liberty of conscience had, nor did they situate protection of conscience within a tradition

²³³ Pincus and Houston, *A Nation Transformed*, 2001, p. 81

of political rights. The idea that Presbyterians were responsible for the conceptual devolution of magisterial power to the individual through discursive development of conscience as a political category is poorly supported. The notion of conscience within these arguments was an adaptive response to political marginalization, not a comprehensive claim for individual liberty. Furthermore, rabid anti-Catholicism lay behind some of these claims, most notably Owen's, and this sentiment both influenced and was supported by conceptualization of conscience in arguments like Owen's. The idea that individuals had an inalienable responsibility to their own consciences had the advantage of excluding Catholics, who subordinated themselves to priests, while celebrating Protestant superiority in embracing spiritual responsibility. The appeal to conscience thus drew upon and contributed to a narrative of English exceptionalism in its capacity for self-government that would remain an important part of English political identity into the nineteenth century.

Locke employed the idea of conscience as a source of moral development in his argument for religious toleration, but he followed the implications of conscience to the conclusion of the early separatists. He concludes that the magistrate had no authority to encroach upon individual conscience. The distinction between private thoughts and public behavior that initially led Locke to support state control over religious worship, and was the basis of Hobbes's argument against religious challenges to the law, was difficult to maintain in practice. In Locke's subsequent work he distinguishes between "what is part of the worship itself and what it but a circumstance" (*Letter Concerning Toleration*, 135). What a person believes to be required by God is an integral part of worship, and thus cannot be undertaken or abandoned without engaging the conscience.

What a person believes about religious worship determines its importance and thus the conscience/public practice distinction does not hold. The magistrate cannot regulate religious practice without also imposing upon the consciences of believers.

Locke subsequently frames the question in terms of the limits on political authority, in particular the power of the magistrate to control the meaning of actions. Restricting the magistrate from the realm of conscience, he argued, does not deprive the law of the authority to control civil disruption. Actions that were threatening to others or to the commonwealth fell properly within the purview of the state, regardless of the meaning attributed to them by the actor. If actions are “not lawful in the ordinary course of life, nor in any private house... neither are they so in the worship of God, or in any religious meeting” (p. 135). By the same token, the state cannot restrict actions that would be lawful in the commonwealth because of their religious meaning:

Whatsoever is permitted unto any of his subjects for their ordinary use, neither can nor ought to be forbidden by him to any sect of people for their religious uses. If any man may lawfully take bread or wine, either sitting or kneeling in his own house, the law ought not to abridge him of the same liberty in his religious worship, though in the church the use of bread and wine be very different, and be there applied to the mysteries of faith and rites of divine worship (136).

He follows the concept of conscience as an irreducible dimension of human moral judgment to the conclusion of the Levellers, particularly Katherine Chidley, regarding full separation of church and state. The state is mandated to secure civil peace, while the church is by necessity a voluntary community of shared beliefs and rituals through which people’s actions and relationships are endowed with meaning. The law should protect people from one another, but not “guard them from the negligence or ill-husbandry of the possessors themselves... God himself will not save men against their wills.” Religious communities, on the other hand, are spontaneous societies that are concerned with the

spiritual development of their members and retain the ability to dismiss or exclude them. From Locke's point of view, like that of Chidley and the Separatist sects of the mid-seventeenth century, self-organizing communities constitute the nation, and government is charged with enabling this pursuit by protecting people from harm. These (religious) groups are not deviants from or destructive to an overarching unity established by the state, but easily coexist within the larger unit of political membership. They are its essence and purpose.

This concept of conscience also contributed to recognition of the ineliminability of differences among people, and the futility of coercion in achieving a uniform religious culture. Some argued that the dangers of religious division would be overcome if the various groups were "prudently managed to ballance each other, and to become more safe and useful." Wolsely considered this balancing possible only if the magistrate were sufficiently removed from regulation of public religion.²³⁴ Others regarded comprehension and toleration as sufficient. Both comprehension and separation arguments highlighted the virtues of incorporating trust networks by including them rather than forcing them to act autonomously. Through including dissenters, the state would become the arbiter of relations between groups and the source of the groups' right to free religious practice. Excluding them, on the other hand, would embolden resistance to the state. In this respect, religion fostered a redefinition of the terms of participation in the state and the means through which the state secured the loyalty and compliance of its members. Slingsby Bethell, for example, argued in a fashion reminiscent of James

²³⁴ Sir Charles Wolsely, Wolseley, *Liberty of Conscience, The Magistrates Interest: Or, to grant Liberty of Conscience to Persons of different Perswasions in matters of Religion, is the great Interest of all Kingdoms and States, and particularly of England; Asserted and Proved.* (1668)

Harrington that persecution encouraged the targeted groups to band together in common interest against the law, while toleration left all factions indebted to the magistrate and “disbanded their single interest.”²³⁵ Wolseley and Peter Pett argued that toleration would foster gratitude among people for the right to practice their religion.²³⁶ Toleration was not an obstacle to unity but the most direct way to realize it. People would not give up their religious convictions and persecution would only strengthen them in their righteousness and fortify resistance. The “heartburings” and conflict over religion in the past were due to the state’s preference for certain religions, not the existence of diverse practices.²³⁷ The negative consequences of religious pluralism are due to unequal treatment of groups by the state, rather than because of a natural combativeness among people arising from religious commitments. If the state refuses full social participation and maintains people in a permanent minority condition it not only misses an opportunity to claim that space of regulation more permanently, it leaves itself continually open to attack on the grounds that regulation of religious life is illegitimate.

²³⁵ Slingsby Bethel, *Present Interest* (1689) p. 21. As de Krey observes similar interest arguments are made in the House of Commons 1670-71 by Col. John Birch. De Krey’s source is Anchitell Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons, from 1667 to 1694* (10 vols. London 1763), I, 228, 421-2.

²³⁶ Sir Charles Wolseley, *Liberty of Conscience, The Magistrates Interest*. (1668). Henry Huntington Library, Wing / W3309. Peter Pett, *A Discourse Concerning Liberty of Conscience In which are Contain’d Proposals About what Liberty in this kind is now Politically Expedient to be given and severall Reasons to shew how much the Peace and Welfare of the Nation is concern’d therein*. London (1661). Pp. 67-69, 75-77. Bodleian Library, Wing 2nd ed. / P1881A.

²³⁷ See for example, *An Expedient for Peace: Perswading An Agreement among Christians from the Impossibility of their Agreement in the Matters of Religion*. (1688). These sentiments were also expressed by Independents during the 1640s. See for example, William Walwyn. *Toleration Justified and Persecution Condemned. The Letter of the London Ministers to the Divines at Westminster; against Toleration, mildly examined; and the mistakes thereof friendly discovered; As well for the sakes of the Independent and Separation, as for the good of the Common-wealth* (1646).

Alternative Narratives of Membership

Economic prosperity is also put forth by advocates of religious toleration as a common interest sufficient to hold the society together in the absence of religious homogeneity. Some argued that toleration would have a salutary effect on trade and foster the prosperity that the tolerant Netherlands enjoyed. Again popish countries figure as a point of negative contrast to reveal the disabilities of imposing a single truth upon religious practice. Others argued that intolerance caused social disruption by forcing dissenters into poverty. Intolerance was thus imprudent and contrary to the divine purpose of the commonwealth to promote well-being among its members.

According to Slingsby Bethell, *The Present Interest of England Stated* (1671), “imposing upon conscience in matters of religion, is a mischief unto trade transcending all others whatsoever.”²³⁸ Bethell cites Spain as an example of the destructiveness of intolerance. He also anticipates Weber’s argument that the devout are more disposed to industry and ensuring their security will benefit the English economy. Sir William Temple (1673) also takes this position in *Observations on the United Provinces of the Netherlands*,²³⁹ as does Sir Charles Wolseley who declared that religious persecution “falls generally more upon the Trading sort of men, than any in the nation.”²⁴⁰ In 1673 the toleration bill was introduced by Lord St. John with pronouncement of “the intention of the bill to bring people and manufacturers into the nation, and to keep those here we have.” John Birch, a leading member of the Dissenters lobby in Parliament argued in

²³⁸ Quoted in Tyacke (1991) p. 34.

²³⁹ Henry Huntington Library, Wing / T657. pp. 99-100, 106-107.

²⁴⁰ Sir Charles Wolseley, *Liberty of Conscience, The Magistrates Interest*. (1668) p. 9. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / W3309.

1668 that toleration was “to the advantage of trade.” One of the numerous anonymous pamphlets that endorsed toleration in the 1680s clearly articulated the vital link between liberty of conscience and economic prosperity,

Trade is in the interest of England and liberty of conscience is in the interest of trade; it being beyond Dispute to all considering Men that the Body of the Industrious Trading Part of the Nation are either themselves Dissenters or Favoureres of those that are (such).²⁴¹

These were not free market, proto-capitalist arguments of a rising bourgeoisie however. They stemmed instead from a concern with the benefits of membership within the commonwealth among ordinary people and they reflect an interest in eliminating the unfair economic burdens imposed upon the poor. Bethell also attacked monopolies on trade and demanded a land register to protect small property owners. He criticized legal and medical fees, urged corporate reform, and objected to immorality among clergy. John Humfrey suggested that economic well being was essential to political cohesion. He argued that intolerance caused economic strife among religious dissidents, who lost their livelihoods and worldly goods as a result of religious persecution. Humfrey also supported a land registry and fairer conditions for ordinary people. He thought economic prosperity would promote political reconciliation. Providing people with “all that Good... which they ever expected... from a Change in Government or a Commonwealth” would secure a new and durable settlement (de Krey 1995:76). John Owen declared that the *Conventicle Act* would disproportionately affect trades people and result in an increase in the general level of poverty.

²⁴¹ Richard Burhogge. *Prudential Reasons for Repealing the Penal Laws Against All Recusants, And for a General Toleration, penn's by a Protestant person of quality.* (1687) p. 10. Huntington Library, Wing / B6155.

The attack on property in the name of religious conformity was another dimension of the problem of religious intolerance that alarmed many observers. It was both a source of material distress and an offense against the ancient constitution, which had become an important narrative of English identity since the 1628 *Petition of Right*. *An Address to the Church of England: Evidencing Her Obligations both of Interest and Conscience to Concurr with His Gracious Majesty in the Repeal of The Penal Laws and Tests*,²⁴² published anonymously in 1688 declared, “There are but two things in the World dear to all Mankind; Religion and Property.” The author characterizes informers, who were compelled and enticed by the 1670 *Conventicle Act* to turn in their neighbors for nonconformity, as “the common enemies of property.” The penal laws directed toward nonconformist were a double violation of the basic purpose of government to secure the well being of members of the commonwealth. Not only did they force people to be hypocrites or suffer persecution, they abrogated the state’s responsibility to protect people from incursion by one another:

The Execution of our *Penal Laws* and the Restraint of *Conscience*, has been the greatest Blow that ever was given to the Hereditary Right of the Subjects of England, their natural Properties and Immunities given and Sealed to them by Magna Charta it self. For who can call his Liberty or Estate his own, whilst a Superior Opinion in Power shall seize our Persons, and confiscate our Estates, for no other cause but difference of Worship and Faith, and neither Person, Estate or Liberty, redeemable under a less Composition than renouncing God: for Conformity of Worship against Conscience is little less (15).

These laws are rendered even more ridiculous by the fact that the ‘truths’ with which people are forced to comply are entirely tied to who is in power. They render the law arbitrary, leaving it without even the pretense of rationality, and empower petty liars to take the property of whomever they accuse.

²⁴² British Library, Wing 2nd ed., 1994 / A564B

The insecurity of property rights was also a problem because of the toll it took on industry and trade. Depopulation and the depressed economy were direct consequences of violation of these rights in the name of religion. “The glory of a prince is the multitude of his people: Not Beggars but Men of Industry,” an anonymous tract from 1689 argued, “But who dares to be industrious that would have his Labours made the Forfeit of his Sober Conscience?”²⁴³ Another anonymous writer argued for the institution of a charter protecting religion akin to the *Magna Charta*’s (alleged) role in establishing property rights. The government should extend the protection it traditionally afforded people concerning property to religion rather than destroy England’s venerable constitution under the auspices of preserving it through religious homogeneity:

For hereby [through such a charter] every one will have his Religion secured to him; by as good a Title as his Land; every one will be secured from the Destructive and Fiery Zeal of his Violent Neighbor... this Great Charter will protect all from the evil of one anothers mistakes; and will put an end to mens ruining and killing one another for God’s sake.’’²⁴⁴

The advantage of toleration to national security was another important theme in arguments for toleration during the Indulgence Controversy (1667-1672) and throughout the 1670s and 1680s. The Presbyterian John Humpfrey, for example, elaborated the ways in which religious compulsion emboldened people to resist hierarchical authority and created attachments to otherwise insignificant matters:

²⁴³ Anonymous, *The Absolute Necessity of Standing by the Present Government: Or a View of the Church-men and Dissenteres, Must Expect; if by their unhappy Divisions Popery and Tyranny should Return again*. (1689) p. 32. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / A112.

²⁴⁴ Anonymous, *An Expedient for Peace: Perswading An Agreement amongst Christians from the Impossibility of their Agreement in Matters of Religion. Also Shewing The Nature and Causes of the Present Differences, the Unreasonableness of Persecution, the Equity of Toleration, and the great Benefits of a Pacifick Charter*. (1688) p. 33. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / E3872A Variant.

Give Indulgence (stated consultedly) and you remove Discontent. You put an end forever to Sedition and Rebellion; You root out the seeds and forment of them; You take away the very pretence... You will win our hearts; You will unite us at home; and for our Enemies abroad, if they dare, let them come.²⁴⁵

Humfrey draws upon Roman history for instruction regarding how Parliament and the king should respond to differences in religion. Quoting Antiochus he argues that his fellow nonconformists are bound first to God but if they are supported in serving God their political loyalty to the state will be assured:

Great Sirs! I am come to You this day from an Authority *more* mighty than the Senate of Rome, in the Name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel. There are a People you prosecute in your Acts, that make conscience of their wayes, and live peaceably. Withdraw this Hostility of yours, for they serve God and are his Confederates, as well as you, or others; and he will bless those that bless such, and be an Enemy to their Enemies (94).

Richard Baxter makes a plea for political unity among Christians within the state church in his forward to a text by John Corbet, published posthumously. Baxter, whom the document claims spoke for many Nonconformists, professed that dissenters wished to join Episcopacy and were faithful observers of the laws of England. Their position as outsiders was a consequence of the laws and the narrowly prescribed practices of the Church of England rather than because of their rebellious nature or intent. Nonconformists were in a state of “grievance and distress” that was not of their own making. They were willing to allow “that some parts of the matter of our dissent are

²⁴⁵ *A Proposition for the Safety & Happiness of the King and Kingdom both in Church and State and prevention of the Common Enemy; by way of Accommodation and Indulgence in matters of Religion. Tendered to the Consideration of his Majesty and the Parliament against their next Session. By a lover of Sincerity & Peace.* (London 1667) p. 92. Union Theological Seminary, Wing / J602.

comparatively small things, and in no wise to be valued more than Unity and Peace.”²⁴⁶

The (Presbyterian) dissenters shared the Episcopal interest in a public settlement and believed one could be cooperatively achieved through focus on common doctrine and commitment to religious regulation. They embraced the union of church and state if the state church would expand to accommodate their practices (1682:22).

Nor was persecution a reasonable way to deal with dissenters whose views were too far from those of the Church of England to be comprehended. From Owen’s point of view the way to deal with “fanaticks” who are kept from the church and *Book of Common Prayer* by “such private odd impressions on their thick beliefs and dark minds,” is not to impose upon their bodies but to “refrain from these men, and let them alone... and you shall see how much more easily they will break all to pieces of themselves, than by your keeping a stir with them” (36). Efforts to control people through hierarchical commands embolden them to identify with the opposite of what is required. Ceasing persecution removes the object that supports solidarity among “fanaticks” and thus neutralizes their disruptive potential.

Religious toleration, many pamphlets argued, is in the interest of civil peace because it fosters loyalty and gratitude among those who are free to practice their religion unimpeded. As other countries demonstrate, “where Toleration is allowed, they have none, or very rarely Rebellions or Seditions.” Toleration, the same author argues, has strengthened unstable forms of government, thus it would be logical to assume that it

²⁴⁶ *An Account given of the Principles and Practices of Several Nonconformists, Wherein it Appears that their Religion is no other than what is Profest in the Church of England.* John Corbet (and approved by many other Nonconformists), Forward by Richard Baxter (1682) pp. 13, 22. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / C6251.

would only add to the already robust endowment of the English monarchy.²⁴⁷ A letter defending the Duke of Buckingham in his support for toleration also recognizes the advantages of toleration in fostering loyalty,

I will appeal to any Man of *Sense* though of never so little *Reason*, whether *Ease*, *Happiness*, and *Plenty* are likeliest to make People Turbulent or *Oppression*?... Let this King give that Liberty which his Predecessors refused, and you shall see whether this King will not be beloved above all that went before Him.²⁴⁸

Another pamphlet argues that persecution in the name of truth is counter to common sense because it establishes as true in one country that which is false in another. Christian doctrine, and the very concept of truth, is reduced to the word of whoever is in power. This ultimately destroys the source of cohesion within the society:

It corrupteth and distracteth the Nature of all Civil Government, by making the measure of Loyalty, not Love, Honour and Obedience to Caesar, but Conformity to the Clergy and religion in Fashion, which destroys the true Dependence and Obligation in Government, and subjects the Lives, Liberties and Estates of the People to the frequent Revolutions of Religion; which ought to stand fixed and Sacred upon the common and undeniable Principles of Civil and Just Government.²⁴⁹

This pamphlet also demonstrates the increasingly common characterization of religious intolerance as control of the society by a factional interest. The alliance between the Church of England and Parliament in maintaining Episcopal hegemony has no pretense to truth, or illusion of representing the interest of the entire country. The penal laws that support the Church of England's dominance are rather a consequence of "men (having

²⁴⁷ *The Great Case of Toleration Stated, And endeavoured to be resolved in order to Publick Security and Peace*. Anonymous (1688) p. 10. Union Theological Seminary, Wing / G1673.

²⁴⁸ *A Defense of the Duke of Buckingham Against the Answer to his Book and the Reply to his Letter* (1685) p. 4. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / D816A.

²⁴⁹ *The Absolute Necessity of Standing by the Present Government: Or a View of the Church-men and Dissenters, Must Expect; if by their unhappy Divisions Popery and Tyranny should Return again*. (1689) p. 31. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / A112.

become) so madly extravagant, in the things they call Religion, and have made such tumults and stirs in this World about the things of another” (1689:1). The penal laws were conceived in passion, not out of reason, and they do not serve their intended purpose. The laws, not religion, have been the source of conflict and civil disruption. They sabotage political loyalty because the state puts itself in opposition to people “in matters of Conscience; which as they have the greatest Ascendent over the Minds of Men, so the Gratifications and Displeasures that have reference to these, of all others do most deeply affect them.”²⁵⁰ Other pamphlets argue that the “heartburnings” attributed to religious independence are in fact due to preferential treatment of one religion over others by the state. The author of *Prudential Reasons* argues, as the Levellers did and Locke would, that religion and government have different purposes. The point of government is to “give as much Contentment, and to make itself as easie as is possible unto all its Subjects, but especially in matters of Conscience.” Locke would argue more pointedly that religions are voluntary associations toward which the state owed impartiality and equal treatment. The duty of the state was to enable private pursuits rather than to determine them.

Anti-Catholic Rhetoric and Scheming

Anti-Catholicism continued to be an important rhetorical device in the toleration debates and became a driving force in the political alliances that facilitated the legalization of dissent. Opposition to Catholicism was not merely religious, although this

²⁵⁰ Richard Burthogge. *Prudential Reasons for Repealing the Penal Laws Against All Recusants, And for a General Toleration*, Protestant Person of Quality (1687). Henry Huntington Library, Wing / B6155.

was the strongest point of objection for Presbyterians. Catholics both domestically and internationally represented blind submission to a religious authority. The protestant identity was linked rhetorically to the ancient constitution in a republican narrative of personal judgment in religious matters that the king allegedly threatened with his Catholic sympathies. Andrew Marvell's description of the mounting fear of Catholicism demonstrates the association between popery and tyranny – both of which were anathema to Englishness: "There has now been for divers years a design carried on to change the lawful government of England into an absolute tyranny, and to convert the established Protestant religion into downright Popery."²⁵¹ Marvell further asserted that English kings do not:

Rule upon the same terms with those of our neighbor nations, who, having by force or by address usurped that due share which their people had in the government, are now for some ages in the possession of an arbitrary power (which yet no prescription can make legal) and exercise it over their persons and estates in a most tyrannical manner. But here the very subjects retain their proportion in the Legislature; the very meanest commoner of England is represented in Parliament, and is a party to those laws by which the Prince is sworn to govern himself and his people. No money is to be levied but by the common consent. No man is for life, limb, goods, or liberty, at the Sovereign's discretion: but we have the same right (modestly understood) in our propriety that the prince hath in his regality: and in all cases where the King is concerned, we have our just remedy as against any private person of the neighborhood, in the Courts of Westminster Hall or in the High Court of Parliament.²⁵²

According to Marvell God clearly authorized popular sovereignty, and popish tyranny was an innovation rather than the religion from which Protestantism developed. The English Constitution was intimately linked to Protestantism, and required a monarch that

²⁵¹ Marvell, Andrew. *An Account of the Growth of Popery, and Arbitrary Government in England*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, (ed.) Alexander B. Grosart (1875), IV, p. 248. Quoted in Greene, Douglas. *Diaries of the Popish Plot* (1977) page viii.

²⁵² Grosart, vol. iv, page 248.

would observe its proper bounds so that he could be the object of popular affection and a symbol of national unity.

Anti-Catholicism was a point of convergence between the Anglican bishops who opposed the king's effort to win the allegiance of dissenters through indulgence and those who rejected the old religion as superstitious, treasonous, and a tyrannical imposition on conscience. The king's difference from the majority of the population with respect to a core aspect of political identity, and his potential to reverse the national religion were a significant source of public distrust. Fear of a Catholic monarch persuaded many Protestants that the risks of pluralism were far less than the risks of surrendering religious control to a monarchy determined by birth. The need for religious security outweighed the need for religious discipline.

Anti-Catholic propaganda played a significant role in stoking political fear of Catholics and suspicion of the king. The Popish Plot, an alleged conspiracy among Catholics to take over England, found an easy audience both among the general population and within the House of Commons.²⁵³ The Earl of Shaftesbury, leader of the Republican faction within Parliament, stoked the embers of anti-Catholicism into a full-

²⁵³The Popish Plot appears to have been invented by Titus Oates, who gave accounts of papist conspiracy to assassinate King Charles and install a Catholic government in England to Israel Tonge, an English clergyman. At Tonge's urging Oates recorded the Plot in 43 articles (later 81) indicting a number of Jesuits, the confessor to Louis XIV and the Queen's physician. Tonge gained an audience with the King who referred the case to the Privy Council where Oates' testimony and a variety of apparently confirmatory circumstantial evidence won further confidence that the plot existed. Tonge was well received before the House of Commons because his accusations accorded with existing anti-Catholic sentiment. Shaftesbury exploited the plot to discredit the government, Oates joined his effort and subsequent witnesses – of even more dubious character than Oates – swept more people into the alleged plot including the Queen herself. Anti-Catholic fervor culminated in a Pope burning ceremony in November of 1679. A number of innocent Catholics were executed as a result of the plot.

scale conflagration. He exploited the plot to generate support for the Exclusion Bill, a move by the House of Commons to exclude the Duke of York from accession to the throne.²⁵⁴ In 1680 the Earls of Shaftesbury and Essex fabricated the uncovering of another dimension of Catholic conspiracy, this time to massacre Protestants in Ireland. The ‘Irish Plot’ was similarly effective because it exacerbated existing fears of Catholics and drew upon memories of the 1641 Irish Rebellion. *An Appeal from the Country to the City* warned its readers of the imminent threat of “troops of papists ravishing your wives and your daughters, dashing your little children’s brains out against the walls, plundering your houses and cutting your own throats, by the name of heretic dogs.”²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ On May 11, 1679 the Commons voted 2 to 1 to introduce the Exclusion Bill but Charles preempted a full vote by dissolving Parliament. Shaftesbury’s faction won reelection and at the 1680 opening of Parliament the Whigs (Shaftesbury) brought Thomas Dangerfield, a counterfeiter, robber and adventurer, to testify that the Duke of York offered him 20 guineas to kill the king. His testimony generated sufficient Commons support to exclude Catholics from the throne and the Exclusion Bill was sent to the House of Lords. The King prevailed in the House of Lords and the bill was defeated 2 to 1, giving the king the upperhand in the conflict with Parliament. In 1681 Charles gained fiscal independence from Parliament with the promise of money from France. Shaftesbury’s exclusion plan lost steam as suspicion and counter propaganda cast doubt on the veracity of the Popish Plot. As Greene observes, when the exclusionists appeared to be protecting the throne from Catholics they were able to win support but when they appeared to be attacking the king they were seen as provoking civil war. One commentator in 1685 indicated popular perception of Shaftesbury as “Head of the Fanaticks”, and appellation that some regarded Buckingham as worthy of as well. *A Defense of the Duke of Buckingham Against the Answer to his Book and the Reply to his Letter* (1685). For a full discussion and source material of the Popish Plot see Greene, Douglas. *Diaries of the Popish Plot*. Delmar, New York: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints 1977.

²⁵⁵ Pamphlet is attributed to Charles Blount but Marshall suggests that it may have been written by Shaftesbury’s chaplain Ferguson. Quoted in Marshall, 2006. *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*. Melinda Zook discusses Ferguson, whom Dryden characterizes as ‘Judas’ and Aphra Behn presents as a black fiend wizard, in “Turncoats and Double Agents in Restoration and Revolutionary England: The Case of Robert Ferguson, The Plotter,” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2009) pp. 363-78. Ferguson was also a close associate of John Owen, despite agreement among most of his contemporaries that he was “a cipher, a liar and a double-crosser” (Zook

Two years later, the Whigs, as this faction would come to be known, were foiled in an alleged plot to assassinate Charles II and his brother James, Duke of York, heir to the throne.²⁵⁶ William Lord Russell, Algernon Sidney the Earl of Essex and many other influential Exclusionists were arrested on the evidence of a single informer.²⁵⁷²⁵⁸ Russell and Sidney were executed for treason, Essex committed suicide in the Tower of London, and many of the others were subjected to imprisonment and public humiliation. Charles II effectively defeated the Exclusionists for a period, by destroying their leadership and forcing its activities abroad.

Whatever the veracity of the plots, both events were important tools in constructing public perception of threat. L'Estrange, whose *Narrative of the Plot set forth for the edification of His Majesties liege-people* (1680) was one of the most important

p.363). In Whig accounts of the Rye House Plot Ferguson is characterized as a “fanatick teacher” and blamed for having pulled Russell, Sidney and Essex into the nefarious activity through deceit. Zook, 1999, p. 110.

²⁵⁶ The alleged conspiracy was known as the Rye House Plot because the assassination was intended to occur at Rye House, the home of republican Richard Rumbold as Charles II and James Duke of York traveled between London and Newmarket. A fire in Newmarket changed the King’s travel plans and the plot never occurred but news of it reached Charles and his supporters.

²⁵⁷ Historian Francis Wrangham described the informer, Lord Howard Escrick, as “a man of abandoned character,” in *The British Plutarch* (1816) page 176. The evidence against Russell was hearsay from unreliable witnesses and alleged only that he “walked up and down in the house of one Shepherd, while some persons held a discourse about seizing the King’s guards.” The trial was rushed so that it might be concluded before witnesses for the defense could arrive. Wrangham notes, “To every impartial person indeed it was evident, that Howard’s testimony deserved not the least degree of credit” (page 180).

²⁵⁸ Melinda Zook argues that the best evidence that the Rye House Plot is that the Whigs never proved it to be so a royalist conspiracy of a conspiracy even when they had the power to do so. She sites the period after the Glorious Revolution, when Whig conspirators were celebrated as martyrs as a time when Whigs might have reframed the plot as a royalist plot to entrap the opposition. Historians in the 1690s and early 1700s continued to present the plot as real. Zook speculates that had the plot been a sham there would have been interest in establishing it as such given the cost of the plot’s discovery to the Whig movement. *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, pp. 110-111.

contemporary challenges to the veracity of the Popish Plot, lamented the gullibility of print audiences and active manipulation of opinion:

How come the Multitude to be Judges of Plots and Popery, more than of Other Crimes and Misdemeanours? For That's the Tribunal of the Faction, where every man is to be made a Traytor, or a Papist, as They think meet. And it is not enough neither to be fairly acquitted upon a Tryal before a Court of Justice; for the Bench and Jury are presently arraign'd upon't by an Appeal to the Rabble.²⁵⁹

The Popish plot involved an alliance between Presbyterian interest and that of the Exclusionists in their scrambling for political power. Presbyterians supported the exclusion of Charles on anti-Catholic grounds but allegations that Jesuits were responsible for stoking more politically radical religious dissenters cut the political roots of the Exclusionists. The move to restrain the king and separate church and state in Oates' accounts were a consequence of Jesuit control. The legacy of the Nonconformist thought from the revolutionary period could not easily be claimed by the Exclusionists, given public fear of war and the construction of that period as one essentially destructive to the well-being of the commonwealth. Presbyterian efforts to demonstrate their loyalty and worthiness of inclusion in the English church also depended upon their distinction from radical nonconformists, whom they regarded as licentious and destructive to society. Presbyterians and republicans both capitalized on anti-Catholicism because it created a clear enemy and source of blame for England's problems that distracted from the complex histories of their own positions. Charles II's connection to the Quakers was a further opportunity to discredit him as alien to the Protestant establishment. One pamphlet, for example, blamed William Penn for the "Quakeritistical Divinity" that

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Raymond, Joad. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early modern Britain*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, page 349. Original 1680, p. 25. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / L1277.

underlies the King's justification for toleration. Anglicans wanted Protestant security, Presbyterians wanted full comprehension within a Protestant church and republicans wanted to limit the power of the throne. Charles II and subsequently James II's Catholicism provided a point of agreement among the various groups, a means of uniting them in opposition and a mask for a variety of agendas.

Advocates of toleration capitalize on anti-Catholic sentiment by characterizing an independent conscience as a specifically "English" and Protestant quality. They also use identity and tradition to challenge the English Protestant self-conceit relative to other nations. They argued that persecution compromises England's alleged moral superiority and turns the nation into an object of derision among Christian and papist nations alike. The Quaker leader George Fox, for example, charges England with falling short even of Turks and heathens, much less living up to its purported Christian values. He laments that Quakers are free to meet and worship when they are captured by Turks but not in their own country:

And therefore they what bear that Great and Worthy Name of Christians, from Christ Jesus, and profess the Holy Scriptures of Truth, and the Royal Law of God, which is to do unto others as they would have them do unto them, should shew forth the Nobility of True Christianity, and the Nature of the Lamb Christ Jesus, which is far above all Turks and Heathens.²⁶⁰

Another pamphlet condemns state control over religious doctrine as justifying accusations from Papists within England and among Papists and Protestants in the rest of the world that England had relativized truth and destroyed the basis of faith. "That the only Rule of Faith in England, is the Parliament of England; that nothing is true Christian

²⁶⁰ George Fox, *To the Chief Magistrate Rulers and Ministers, Justices of the Peace, and Officers* (1684). Friend's Library, London, England. Wing 2nd ed. / F1954.

Doctrine in England... but what is judg'd so to be by the Parliament of England" (22).²⁶¹

Papism, longevity of practice and the standards of "civilized" people also play an important role in arguments for the free discourse of ideas. Charles Blount's 1679 pamphlet, *A Just Vindication of Learning and the Liberty of the Press* begins with the assertion, "All civilized People, as well Ancient as Modern, have ever had that veneration and deference for Learning, that almost no Nation, disengaged from Barbarism, wants its publick Donations either of magnificent Structures, or plentiful Revenues, for the encouragement of Literature and Learned men."²⁶² The patrons of learning were the heroes of old and the reason for their societies' great achievements. He laments the effects of licensing and censorship on intellectual culture in his own time. The impulse to constrain the flow of ideas he deems, rather predictably, "an old Relique of Popery, only necessary for the concealing of such defects of Government, which of right ought to be discover'd and amended" (2). He casts the practice as "one of the most dangerous and mischievous Monopolies and Oppressions our Government is subject to" (11) because of the influence an evil ruler might thus have over popular opinion. In an argument reminiscent of those in the 1640s he declares,

I am confident that a Kingdom governed by the rules of Justice and Fortitude, or a Church built and founded upon the rock of Faith and true Knowlegde, cannot be so Pusillanimous...Every Author Writes either Truth or Falsehood; if he Writes Truth, why should he be oppressed or stifled? And if he delivers what is False, let him be confuted by Answer, whereunto every Author is subject; since no cause ever suffered by being answered, only by Fire and Faggot (10-11).

Like Busher at the beginning of the century he contends that these practices erode

England's claim to moral superiority and thus "robs us of that great Argument we make

²⁶¹ *A Letter from a Gentleman in the City to a Gentleman in the Country, About the Odiousness of Persecution* (1687) p. 22. Henry Huntington Library, Wing / N3.

²⁶² Henry Huntington Library, Wing / B 3307.

use of against the Mahometans; and what is worse, Popish Religion, viz. That Ignorance is the Mother of their Devotions” (13).

In other pamphlets, attempts to control the inevitable diversity among people by limiting English identity are cast as ridiculous. The 1688 *Expedient for Peace*²⁶³ discusses varieties of human understanding as natural and akin to physical variation, and concludes that natural diversity cannot be a crime. It is beyond the purview of government to render such diversity uniform:

For it has been made to appear to the World, That Conscience ought not to be constrained, that a Corporall Punishment ought not to be inflicted for a Spiritual Fault; that men ought not to Punish where they have no power to Command (9).

Elsewhere the author casts attempts to authoritatively define and limit Protestant identity as absurd and asks, “Now if we should be so foolish in other concerns, what would the World think of us? If the Yorkshire-men should say the Kentish-men are no Englishmen: or the [] Taylors tell the Mercers they are no Citizens, would not the Asserters be exposed to derision?”(14). Furthermore, he argues, under the current fashion of religious difference a person who espouses only Christian doctrine and will not get embroiled in conflicts over sectarian divisions is considered an atheist (34).

A 1683 imagined exchange between a “heathen” and a papist dramatizes the irrationality of the exclusive state church by subjecting it to the scrutiny of an outsider, over whom Christians believe themselves to be morally superior. *A Dialogue between an East Indian Brackmanny or Heathen-Philosopher, and a French Gentleman Concerning*

²⁶³ Anonymous, *An Expedient for Peace* (1688). Union Theological Seminary, Wing / E3872.

*the Present Affairs of Europe*²⁶⁴ asks “Can anything be more absurd than to turn Earth into a kind of *Hell*, under pretense of driving men to *Heaven*? And to commit Murders and Cruelties for the sake of the God of Life and Love?”²⁶⁵ The dialogue serves the dual purpose of condemning papism, establishing it as worse than ‘heathen’, and showing the practice of persecution to be both papist and absurd. The Frenchman inquires about the East Indian’s support for liberty of conscience: won’t it bring destruction to government? Isn’t it “the very Nurse of Rebellion”? The East Indian expresses the advantage of separation of church and state to civil peace and the ineliminability of human differences that make the quest for uniformity futile and destructive:

He that fears God, and hurts not his Neighbor, oppresseth not the Creation, and obeys the civil Laws of the Country he lives in and freely pays all Duties and Tributes to the Princes that protect him, is a good and faithful Subject to God and his King. Nor have we a temptation to Rebellion, for to us all Governments are alike, as long as they protect us from Violence” (12) “And we [unintelligible] scarce know any thing that is a greater Evil, than for men to Contend, Hate, Envy, Oppress, Fight and Destroy one another because they are not in all particulars like themselves: For men naturally are as various in their *Intellects* as in their *Shapes*, *Forms* and *Complexions*” (13)

History was both an important rhetorical tool in the toleration debates during this period, and highly contested terrain. Arguments both for and against toleration were frequently based on an historical construction of the problem, tying a particular solution to its longevity and source. Roger Morrice’s albeit unfinished history of Puritanism from Edward VI to the beginning of the Civil War is one example of the importance of historiography in political and theological claims. Morrice’s work was intended as a vindication of the Nonconformist tradition, which along with Edward history of the

²⁶⁴ Published anonymously, attributed to Tyron Thomas. Harvard University Library, Wing / D 1301.

²⁶⁵ Anonymous (1683) page 4

ejected clergy challenged the Church of England's effort to establish its own authority as continuous and uncontested.²⁶⁶ The English strategy of casting political innovation as long standing practice was well established by the late seventeenth century. The history of Protestantism and persecution are presented as resources for identifying the source and trajectory of the religious problem, which is in turn regarded as critical to its resolution. References to the *Magna Charta* become more common in claims to political rights along with appeals to the continuity of particular practices as evidence of their inviolability. This use of history is present in pamphlets and political tracts as well as in works that are self-consciously historiographic.

Specific moments in the past were revived and reinterpreted in order to shape popular perception of present circumstances. The revocation of the *Edict of Nantes* and subsequent persecution of the Waldensians in 1685-6 for example, was presented by contemporary commentators as yet another episode of Catholic violence against Protestants. According to John Marshall's exhaustive account of the decade leading up to the *Act of Toleration*, the flood of religious refugees into England and Holland in 1685 was a significant factor in priming the English population against a Catholic king – especially one who sought an alliance with France.²⁶⁷ In popular print, the violence in France was tied to prior examples of Catholic rabidity, including the burning of Protestants by Queen Mary in England, the St. Bartholemew's Day massacre in France in 1572, the devastation of the Thirty Years War in Germany and the violence against

²⁶⁶ Wykes, David. "Dissenters and the Writing of History: Ralph Thoresby's Lives and Characters," in McElligott, Jason (ed.). *Fear, Exclusion and Revolution*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006. Pp. 174-188.

²⁶⁷ Marshall also notes that the escalation of Huguenot oppression in France was partly in response to reports of Catholic executions in England. (2006:25).

English Protestants in Ireland in 1641 (Marshall 2006:58). As Marshall demonstrates English Protestants regarded themselves as part of a transnational community of believers and their assessment of their own risks and prospects was based on the experiences of other Protestants.

The Act of Toleration

James II, the successor to Charles II was openly Catholic. He took the throne in 1685 amidst heightened anti-Catholic sentiment despite efforts to exclude him from the line of succession by a Parliamentary faction that would become known as the “Whigs.” James II, like his brother, sought relief for Catholics and saw an encompassing toleration policy as the most effective means to achieve it. He issued a *Declaration of Indulgence* in 1687 that included Dissenters and Catholics with the assertion that constraining consciences and compelling people in matters of religion “has ever been directly contrary to our inclination, as we think it is to the interest of government” followed by a list of reasons for toleration reflective of the larger pro-toleration debate. He cites the impact on trade, economic degradation and depopulation as the principle reasons in support of his ‘recognition’ of this perennial disposition among the English. His declaration dispensed with all religious tests and granted a broad toleration to dissenting religious practices. He also granted favor to Presbyterians at court and installed several Presbyterians in positions of consequence (Mullet 1949:37). James II’s efforts met a hostile reception both from the Anglican bishops, who had no wish to see Catholics tolerated and were wary of James’s intentions with respect to the Church of England, and from toleration advocates within Parliament who saw the declaration as a direct threat to Parliamentary authority.

The following year James reissued the declaration with an order that it be read in every parish.

The bishops refused to comply with James' order but fear that he would gain the support of Dissenters prompted a factional realignment on the subject of toleration. For many, including Archbishop Sancroft, who had opposed religious toleration and supported absolute monarchy for over two decades, religious diversity ceased to be the primary threat to either the church or the state. The issue of religious toleration was reframed in terms of the collective interest in preserving Protestantism from the dangers of Papism, and Parliament from abrogation by monarchical fiat (Marshall, Schochet, Tyacke). Public exchange prompted by George Savile, Marquis of Halifax²⁶⁸ in *A Letter to a Dissenter, Upon Occasion of His Majesties Late Gracious Declaration of Indulgence* (1687) indicates the intersection of the toleration issue with larger political interests and the various efforts to shape Dissenting opinion.

Halifax chastises Dissidents for undermining the Law by accepting the King's grant of indulgence. He argues that by accepting the king's accommodation of their religious differences they undermined the source of their protection from arbitrary power. They should, he urges them, put the Law above their own petty interests. Dissidents' gratitude for relief from persecution was understandable, but supporting this extension of monarchical power was ultimately foolhardy and would erode whatever public sympathy might exist for their cause:

The desire of enjoying a Liberty from which men have been so long restrained, may be a Temptation that their Reason is not at all times able to resist... but where to rescue yourself from the severity of one Law, you give a Blow to all the Laws, by

²⁶⁸ Halifax was Shaftesbury's leading opponent during the Exclusion debates and his oratory skills are considered one of the principle factors in the Bill's defeat.

which your Religion and Liberty are to be protected; and instead of silently receiving the benefit of this Indulgence, you set up Advocates to support it, you become voluntary Aggressors, and look like Counsel retained by the Prerogative against your old Friend Magna Charta, who hath done nothing to deserve her sailing thus under your Displeasure...[]... If you will set up at one time a Power to help you, which at another time by parity of Reason shall be made use of to destroy you, you will neither be pitied nor relieved against a Mischief you draw upon yourselves, by being so unreasonably thankful. It is like calling in Auxiliaries to help, who are strong enough to subdue you: In such a case your Complaints will come to late to be heard, and your Sufferings will raise Mirth instead of Compassion.²⁶⁹

Halifax portrays Dissenters as attacking the constitution by undermining Parliamentary power in giving their support to the King. Their lack of respect for the law and its (potential) protection of their religion shows a selfish and shortsighted disregard for the larger tradition that binds them to their fellow countrymen.

Anti-Papism is also an important component of Halifax's appeal to Dissenters. He characterizes papal endorsement of liberty as absurd, given the priority accorded to obedience and infallibility by Papists. The liberty they gain from the monarch is not real but only pretended. What they are actually doing in accepting it – rather than seeking support from Parliament as the proper source of legal toleration – is affirming arbitrary power. He urges Papists to recognize that they are being exploited and that by accepting their role in James's scheme they are putting themselves and the nation at great risk of a papist takeover. The Protestants in France, he argues, illustrate the likely end of those who gain their peace through indulgence (14). Halifax concludes with a plea for Dissenters to recognize their greater commonality with Protestants and the Church of England. They should not mimic the errors of the Church of England during the Restoration by being blinded by revenge:

²⁶⁹ George Halifax, Marquis of Savile. *A Letter to a Dissenter upon Occasion of His Majesties late gracious Declaration of Indulgence*. (1687). P. 9. Union Theological Seminary, Wing / H311.

To conclude, the short Question will be: Whether you will joyn with those who must in the end run the same Fate with you. If Protestants of all sorts, in their Behaviour to one another, have been to blame, they are upon the more equal terms, and for that very reason it is fitter for them now to be reconciled. Our Dis-union is not only a Reproach, but a Danger to us; those who believe in modern Miracles, have more Right, or at least more Excuse, to neglect all Secular Cautions; but for us, it is as justifiable to have no Religion, as wilfully to throw away the Humane Means of preserving it. (17)

Several leaders of Nonconformist communities saw the matter differently, and urged Dissenters to graciously accept the relief afforded them by the *Declaration*. Stephen Lobb, a minister and representative of the Nonconformist community to James' court, issued a *Second letter to a Dissenter Upon Occasion of His Majesties Late Gracious Declaration of Indulgence* (1687) that celebrated Dissenters freedom from bondage and tried to assuage fears of papism. He argued that Papists would not gain undue influence as a result of repeal of the *Test Act*. Furthermore, even if the indulgence were a consequence of advantage seeking on the part of the king, Dissenters would be no worse off for support him. His tone is reminiscent of Catholic petitions for toleration to James I. The proper role of Catholics is gratitude for a favor rather than entitlement to a traditional right: "Be not wanting in your Thankfulness, Love and dutiful Subjection and Obedience to him, so that his Majesty may have a full satisfaction that his favors are not bestowed on an Ungrateful and Obstinate People."²⁷⁰

William Penn also urged people to support the King by electing a parliament that would not sabotage his objective.²⁷¹ For Penn the question was not from whom liberties

²⁷⁰ Stephen Lobb, *A Second Letter to a Dissenter*. (1687) p. 10. Wing (2nd ed.) / L2729A.

²⁷¹ Penn, William. *Advice to Freeholders and other Electors of Members to Serve in Parliament in relation to the penal laws and the tests: in a letter to a friend in the Conntry* [sic] (1687). Bodelian Library, Wing / P1250.

proceed or the risk of undermining the foundations of law by supporting the dispensing power of the king. Rather, liberty of conscience was a fundamental condition that could only be prevented through human error. God ordained this liberty and thus however it was achieved, however the error of intolerance was prevented, was a means of realizing God's will. Intolerance and persecution had resulted in alienation of the king from the people and a variety of other ills. The idea that "only one part of his Majesties subjects (and that a lesser part, than some are willing they should be thought) deserve to live and be protected" had confined the interest of the king to only one party. Penn expresses gratitude that "we have grown out of this opinion and Liberty of Conscience can unite people and the king once again." Members of the Church of England should remember that they also sought the liberty to worship when they were not in power and in that spirit they should accept the king's clemency toward others, for it is by the king's grace that they retain their own right to worship. (6). Religious liberty could not erode the foundation of the law, for "no other [laws should be had] in God's Kingdom, but his own Laws, those only being proper and adequate, and therefore a thousand times better than all the Laws of Men" (13).

Roger L'Estrange, who had earlier exposed the Popish Plot as a farce, responded point by point to Halifax's *Letter*, highlighting its fallacious use of papism as a counterpoint to its own political position.²⁷² L'Estrange alleges that Parliamentary efforts to court Dissenters are every bit as self-interested as the Papists'. The irony of the Church of Rome offering "Plaisters for tender consciences" he contends, would be no greater

²⁷² L'Estrange, *An Answer to a Letter to a Dissenter Upon Occasion of His Majesties Late Gracious Declaration of Indulgence* (1687). University of Illinois, Wing / L1195.

than the Church of England's doing the same. He further challenged Halifax's characterization of papists as the source of Nonconformist persecution. The Church of England only managed to avoid blame by manipulating popular understanding of its history. They were "Master-Operators, within the *Memory of Man*, in the very way of *Amputation* too. (12).

L'Estrange's position was strongly royalist and his understanding of liberty was consistent with this commitment. He argued that the Parliament, and all assemblies, existed at the will of the monarch and thus the monarch retained power over its decisions. Liberties were specific rather than abstract. The liberties in question were consequent upon the English political order, and were thus "totally Depending upon the Political Judgment of the Sovereign Magistrate" (9). James recognized the Church of England's historical support for the monarchy and pledged to protect it in his first Privy Council meeting upon assuming the throne. There was no evidence to support allegations that he sought to impose Papism on the country. L'Estrange thus characterizes James' intentions with respect to the Church of England as benign, and urges people to cease using papism to generate political strife. Conspiracy is unnecessary to understand unity among papists and dissidents, he argues. Bald self-interest in gaining relief from persecution is sufficient explanation:

The Papists would be at Liberty; and so would the Dissenters; And I think they should deserve to be Chronicled for Idiots, and Mad-Men, not to Unite in any Common Medium, with Justice, Honour, and a Good Conscience, toward their Joint-Ease, and Relief. And what's the Papists Friendship now, to Liberty; but that they would fain be out of their Shackles, Themselves? And what's their Enmity to Persecution, but a Desire to stand upon Even Ground, with the rest of the Kings Subjects? Especially, as they are Entitled to it by the Kings Late Indulgence. God forbid, that any Honest English Man should Envy any of his Fellow Subjects the Benefit of the Kings Mercy; because (in Effect) a man can hardly do it, without

some sort of Reflexion upon his Sacred Wisdom and Goodness.²⁷³

Factional interest was another important theme of this debate. Both the Anglican establishment and James' positions were acknowledged as political, and primarily directed toward maintaining power. Penn argues that James must be taken at his word, to question his motivations is to challenge his trustworthiness as a monarch. However, he still ultimately approaches the question through the pragmatic self-interest of the various parties involved. Similarly, several commentators characterize the greater willingness of the establishment to forego the penal statutes than to give up the *Test Act*, which prevented Nonconformists from holding office, as protection of political self-interest.

Lobb, for example, describes his contemporaries as unwilling to let go of the *Test Act* because these provisions allow them to maintain control over the government: "knowing that it capacitates them at any time to revive again those Laws, or to make worse, if worse can be made, and to subject all men to what state and condition they please."²⁷⁴ Lobb concludes from this observation that the right to full political participation was the real source of security of religious practice: "Therefore never account the Nation free, but subjected to an Iron Yoke, and yourselves to be lashed with Scorpions for your Consciences, until these Tests and Penal Statutes are abrogated, and thereby both his Majesty and every body else absolutely freed from them." Sir Edmund Jennings, on the other hand, speaks from the dominant Anglican position in arguing that Test Laws should not be repealed because they were "made for the Security of the Government, and the Preservation of the Reform's Religion, according to the Doctrine of

²⁷³ L'Estrange. *An Answer to a Letter to a Dissenter* (1687).

²⁷⁴ Lobb, Stephen, *A Second Letter to a Dissenter* (1987).

the Church of England: And no Man can think this a Time to Repeal such, but such as desire to Settle Popery in the Nation.”²⁷⁵

The debate concerned the critical question of membership within the English polity. While Halifax had a tempestuous relationship with Shaftesbury’s supporters as a consequence of his opposition to the Exclusion Bill, his position in the *Letter to a Dissenter* essentially represents the pro-toleration position within Parliament. Toleration was a desirable policy but not at the expense of aggrandizing monarchical power. However, in calling upon the moral responsibility of Dissenters to support the law, understood as the decisions of a political body that used its power to excluded them from representation, he was asking them to support an abstract notion of liberty grounded in a political process rather than positive rights afforded to them by the monarchy. Halifax apparently recognized that the balance of power between Parliament and the monarch was developing in practice from popular and institutional acceptance of the exercise of certain powers as legitimate. The danger of both papism and strengthening the power of the king made Protestant toleration through an act of Parliament a more appealing option than a toleration that included papists by monarchical decree.

Halifax’s argument also points out the inherent limitations on democratic representation in the absence of constitutionally established rights. Where political membership proceeded from confessional orientation Dissenters were not actually included in the popular component of the monarchical republic that the parliamentarians were seeking to actualize. Their access depended upon the sympathies, strategizing or

²⁷⁵ Sir Edmund Jennings (1688) *The Commissioners having proposed questions to Sir Edmund Jennings, to which they desired his answer* (1688). Wing / C559. A response to Commission by James II before Parliamentary elections following *Declaration of Indulgence*.

convictions of members of Parliament because they had no means of acting on their own interests. The idea of an exclusive assembly yielding an inclusive justice, or that Nonconformists should uphold Parliament as a source of religious liberty despite its consistent refusal to grant it, was not particularly compelling without the addition of anti-Catholicism in fortifying Protestant identity. Protestant conformists and nonconformists could be persuaded that they were more alike than Catholics, who over more than a century had been constructed as anathema to Englishness and an ever-present threat both domestically and internationally.

Yet, there was another narrative of English collective identity that held greater potential for comprehensiveness. The “ancient constitution” had been rhetorically constructed in public debate since before the English Revolution. It had been the basis of political appeal from all sides of the debate and was a compelling frame of membership for a broad sector of political society. Advocates of toleration invoked this narrative to claim the “birthright entitlements” of Englishness for all members of the society, regardless of their confessional orientation. These rights imposed limits on the state’s exercise of power *vis à vis* the individual but they did not indicate from where such power proceeded. Was the constitution secured by the monarch or by Parliament? The Anglican establishment’s effort to maintain their hegemony in the face of pro-Catholic monarchs had considerably strengthened the capacity of Parliament to regulate the terms of membership within the state-church. Parliament’s anti-toleration position in turn complicated the role ascribed to it in ancient constitution narratives. Parliament should have been the source of popular representation within a mixed monarchy, but it had come to embody a specific partisan interest on the behalf of which it consistently violated

ancient English rights.

The monarch, as L'Estrange argued, could be as an encompassing symbol of English society and a source of protection for the religious liberties of all members. Political legitimacy based on monarchical sovereignty and the inherited transmission of authority would eliminate the problem of religious conformity. The monarch – whose office and power had been constructed through religion – was able to provide a symbolic and authoritative focal point for political cohesion. Religious difference was less an issue for a nation of subjects, of loyal vassals grateful for protection and peace, than for a nation of citizens who were mutually engaged in a project of government. Yet to the degree that the question of toleration overlapped with a republican notion of individual liberty, understood as fundamental rights secured through representative government, monarchical indulgence was not an acceptable solution. The idea that the people were the source of the political covenant, that their judgment and vitality were critical factors in a successful society, was anathema to consolidating power over religion in a single person. This was not merely an imprudent course given the historical evidence, it was inconsistent with the way that people understood themselves as a nation and their relationship to political authority.

The arguments for religious toleration by the 1680s were largely posed in terms of *raison d'etat* because the dominant Anglican discourse against religious toleration limited the frame of the debate to the positive ability of the state to exercise power over religion. The doctrine of indifferency justified this claim, and availed Anglicans of the response that they were not treading on tender consciences nor compelling people toward hypocrisy, but merely seeking outward compliance with a set of religious practices that

were essential to cultivating political unity. Religion, to the horror of some of the more devout Dissenters, was thus reduced to an instrumental ritual, absent of any motive force but state (parliamentary) decree. The idea that the commonwealth was served by religious homogeneity was countered with arguments and examples of the detrimental effects of seeking to achieve the desired uniformity. Among the consequences of this shift in the nature of debate were greater transparency and acknowledgement of contention among factional interests and recognition of the need to accommodate such interests within a larger frame of membership.

Principled arguments for liberty of conscience did not go away however, despite the fact that they were no longer foregrounded in the debate. The question of conscience was linked to the larger issue of political right, which was rooted in narratives of tradition, divine covenant and Protestant exceptionalism. Toleration was less often grounded in an absolute notion of truth than in consistency of practice or the rational purpose of the polity. Earlier in the century, liberty of conscience was understood as fundamental to God's emergence in the world. Progressive social change required spiritually autonomous individuals who were free to debate, publish and convene to discover the truth and give it expression in the world. These ideas helped to reshape the discourse of government from the constituting force of the polity to a manifestation of collective will that would serve the common interest. By the end of the seventeenth century the idea of the state as an agent of the common good was well established within common political arguments. The question became instead whose good would define the state and how a collective could be maintained in the context of disparate understandings of truth. If individuals could claim exemptions from the collective will (expressed

through the law) what would stop the polity from splintering into a chaotic competition of wills?

Roughly three theories of community and governance are evident in the debates about the proper role of religion in public life during the mid to late seventeenth century. The first, the Anglican theory of the state, posited tradition as the ground of political authority. In this view, which would develop into British Conservatism, history produced a given form of government because of its suitability to the particular needs of a political community. An idea of a 'we' that evolved particular governing practices appropriate to the experiences and needs of the collective underlies political entitlements and obligations. Change is disruptive. Reason and right do not stand outside the political system but are tied to its operation.

The second is the liberal notion of the state, developed through the arguments of the Levellers and the early separatists. In this view, which was most influential in the American colonies where many of the Nonconformists took refuge, civil government is distinct from society and should not regulate private life. Restraints on governmental power are consequent upon its purpose in serving human life. Civil government exists to provide security from external threat and internal dissension, not as an end unto itself but to facilitate the advance of justice and truth in the world. People must be free to pursue their own concept of the good because popular energy is the source of progressive change, and the means through which society comes to realize its divine mission. The original arguments to justify liberal principles of government conceptualize political authority as grounded in divinity and as the essential condition for realizing the divine purpose of the political community. Competition among people and the danger of false or

self-serving behavior are best contained by public exposure and rational scrutiny. Human capacities are mixed, thus collective energy is more likely to yield a just outcome than the authoritative suppression of the many by the few. Furthermore, history indicates that suppression strengthens convictions and thus is imprudent even if the truth could be known with certainty. Rather than emboldening error by forcing it underground, it is necessary to expose truth claims to the light of reason and allow them to be vetted through public debate. Established churches that impose a single truth are static and counterproductive to the divine mission of realizing a just society. In the liberal view, the persecuting impulse is the biggest threat to political order, whether it is manifest in groups, individuals, or in the government itself.

Finally, the Presbyterian concept of the state in these debates is essentially authoritarian. It puts the coercive capacity of the state in service to a specific understanding of religious truth. The problem of contention about the nature of truth or the requirements of the scripture is resolved by attributing the disagreement to characterological deficiencies in people. The good cannot be left to the collective to decide because the result will be a chaotic competition of interests. People need to be instructed in the proper way to do things. The state church, under the direction of a moral elite, should lead the way.

The realm of shared knowledge is an important difference between the Anglican and Presbyterian traditions. Early Presbyterian arguments for a federated church structure claimed that the social needs of a community could only be met through small groups. However the logic of granting moral priority to the group is challenged by the Anglican consensus, which argues that once group discretion is allowed there is no way to stop the

collective from fragmenting. The struggle between the Presbyterian and Anglican perspectives concerns both the appropriate level of government and the conceptual priority of religion in the church-state relationship. The Anglican doctrine of indifferency establishes the nation-state as the primary frame of membership and political authority. Anglican confessional uniformity is a requirement of the state and consequent upon the will of the collective rather than divine mandate. Confessional homogeneity is constructed purely as a political concern in Anglican discourse. Religion serves the interest of the state. Presbyterians reverse the order of priority between church and state. The church is the primary and ultimate frame of membership. Truth is knowable, but experiencing it requires discipline and guidance from moral authority. The political community, in the Presbyterian view, provides the force and structure necessary to foster correctly believing members of the church-state.

The Restoration essentially meant the failure of the Presbyterian and Independent visions of the state. With the reestablishment of the monarchy the Anglican clergy regained control over the church and considerable influence over social regulation. However, the Restoration church was no longer an arm of the monarchy through which it projected power. In the context of the restored monarchy the church functioned as an autonomous interest seeking to recover and maintain its own hegemony. Parliament proved a more willing ally in preserving Anglican dominance than the papist-leaning monarchs, particularly with regard to the question of religious toleration. The bishops' support for Parliament in turn aided that institution's struggle for preeminence.

Yet within its own rationale of regulating matters "indifferent" toward the well-being of the commonwealth, the Anglican effort to establish religious uniformity through

persecution was also a failure. Empowering the state to regulate conscience authorized its encroachment upon the birthright liberties of the English people, thus destroying the very constitution that uniformity was meant to maintain. Differences among people, the power of identity within groups to shape practices and beliefs and the limits of coercion in overcoming individual attachment to particular group identities required a new approach to maintaining social discipline and political cohesion. The idea of the state as a self-justifying frame of political authority facilitated reconceptualization of the relationship between religion and state in England, ultimately generating new narratives of political membership based in political rather than confessional criteria.

The so called “Glorious Revolution,” that deposed James II and replaced him with Protestant monarchs – and as Lois Schwoerer argues, a different kind of monarchy – is an enactment of the principles of popular sovereignty and a codification of the rhetorically transformed role of government to secure particular entitlements of the English people. It also represents institutionalization of the Protestant religion as a defining factor in English identity. The ‘we’ that constituted the English nation and authorized the power of the monarch was a Protestant, specifically an Anglican ‘we.’ The *Act of Toleration*, which followed on the heels of William and Mary’s ascent to the throne, was both a tacit admission of defeat of the policy to induce conformity and a means of securing Anglican dominance.

The *Act of Toleration* merely ceased active persecution of religious dissent. As many scholars have observed it did not inaugurate an era of liberty of conscience, nor was it recognition of a fundamental right to individual self-determination in religious matters. Its passage does however mark the culmination of over a century of struggle

over the relationship between religion and public life. Scholars generally agree that the *Act of Toleration* occurred because the various parties involved regarded it as the best way to retain power and secure the state from the foreign and domestic threat of papism. But this perception is a consequence of a discursive construction of the state in terms radically different from those even a few decades earlier.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The burden of this chapter is to argue why religion should be put back into social scientific analysis of political development: to justify why stylized histories are not sufficient and what can be learned from looking at the role of religion in political development through this case. In one respect historical accuracy is sufficient reason to reconsider the assumptions on which models of political development are built. If a pattern is being identified through ‘data’ that is, in effect, the happenings of the past, it is more likely to be a reliable tool if it is not based on false assumptions. This is not to suggest that through interrogating the discourses that accompany (and perhaps inform) political change we will arrive at a ‘true’ picture of the past. Nor is it to suggest that perfect information would yield perfect understanding. The ‘horizon of meaning’ that Gadamer recognized as the unavoidable prejudice with which we engage in any historical inquiry, is inescapable.²⁷⁶

The social scientist’s interest in the past is ultimately in its relevance to the present, either in tracing the source of some contemporary phenomena or in identifying parallels between past and present that provide insight into general processes of social change. Our purpose is to find out what the past has to say about us. This task of comparative historical analysis is best achieved by recognizing and negotiating the biases we bring to analysis. While the scope of the political scientist’s questions may preclude the close attention to material that characterizes the work of historians, political scientists nonetheless must make an effort to attend to the categories employed in the past on their own terms rather than apply contemporary categories to phenomena that may not actually

²⁷⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*.

fit the patterns the categories identify. How people understand their own experience is not necessarily essential to political analysis but understanding the knowledge culture and language within which people specify the meaning of their actions is, lest we take designations that only nominally match modern concepts to identify analogous phenomena. Furthermore, the regularity we identify in patterns of human organization will inevitably be imposed rather than discerned if we don't look at processes of change from within particular time periods. Some analysts employ the heuristic of rational choice theory or emphasize structural factors in explanations of social change in order to avoid the problem of knowledge posed by temporal and cultural horizons. But these approaches at best hold human agency constant. They provide no means of capturing how people develop and propagate new ideas and how those ideas reshape the structural, psycho-social and semiotic conditions of rationality.²⁷⁷

My own immediate reason for tracing the relationship between religion and liberal political principles is to shed light on the contemporary puzzle of the impact of religion on democratization. I undertook this analysis of early modern England because

²⁷⁷ This characterization of 'structure' as distinct from the ways it is born within human thought and relations, i.e. 'culture,' is intended to reflect the dominant division within the discipline of political science between structure as a set of relations among things independent of human meanings that can be understood through a positivist logic of inquiry and the meanings people ascribe to those relations, through which they understand themselves and their relations to others. Mark Bevir (Bevir and Kedar 2008) is chief among the current proponents of an "anti-naturalist" logic of inquiry that accounts for a situated understanding of people's actions that accounts for the meanings the actors ascribe to them and that they communicate to others. Such a division between 'structure' and these aspects of 'culture' are perhaps insensible to an anthropologist for whom semiotic resources are every bit as concrete and external to the individual as economic relations and the critical dichotomy is culture and agency. For a discussion of the different use of the term structure across social science disciplines see Sewell, William. "A Theory of Structure," in *Logics of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 124-7.

the trajectory of liberalism is misunderstood, and as a consequence erroneous assumptions underlie the dominant theories of political change. Liberal democracy remains the anticipated telos of political development despite efforts by some scholars to consider unique paths of development or recognize the possibility that history has not exhausted potential forms of political organization. Normatively liberal democracy is often a shorthand for freedom from arbitrary or coercive power on one hand, and freedom to influence the distribution of benefits and burdens within a political collective. In a discussion of the transportability of democracy across cultural contexts Giovanni Sartori specifies the term as meaning both “demo-protection, i.e. protection from tyranny; and “demo-power,” or the implementation of popular rule (2001).²⁷⁸ In his analysis the value of liberal democracy lies in the demos-protection dimension, while demos-power is merely a question of implementation. There are many advocates of deliberative democracy who would object that there is an inherent virtue in political participation, or that protection is only possible through an empowered citizenry. In this view the form of democratic organization is a vital aspect of its function. Jack Knight and James Johnson offer a pragmatic assessment of democracy’s virtue as simply a better means of aggregating diverse interest. They argue that democracy provides a feedback loop and self-correcting mechanisms that optimize policy outcomes. The superiority of democracy

²⁷⁸ Sartori is obviously drawing upon a long tradition of democratic theorizing. The tension between these two conditions of a just government are present in Plato, and overtly developed in Aristotle, who distinguished between a collective governed toward a common good and the tyranny of the majority, or democracy as mob rule. I cite Sartori because his argument for the universal value of democracy cautions that the particular form of implementation of accountable government and protection from arbitrary power developed in the West are historically contingent processes. Cross cultural comparisons – and opportunistic rejections of liberal democratic principles by ambitious politicians – are complicated by the fusion of these two components into the short hand “democracy” (2001).

proceeds from its ability to assess the accuracy of the conditions presumed by a particular institutional scheme for distributing collective benefits and burdens, and provide feedback regarding the actual operation of the system.²⁷⁹

The global flow of ideas and expertise in the modern world encourages both the demand for liberal democracy in certain quarters, and opportunities for dictators to fortify their power through identity cultivation that relies upon the west as “other” to discredit liberal democracy as a foreign or imperialist ideology.²⁸⁰ Understanding whether or not democracy can be ‘exported’ or manufactured through regulatory reform and establishment of interest aggregating procedures like elections is an important contemporary question both from the standpoint of human rights, and in shaping foreign policy. But even as scholars recognize the dependence of political institutions on supporting cultural practices, progress – or lack thereof – continues to be measured with respect to an idealized understanding of liberal democratic development in the “west”. Lipset’s insights continue to guide theoretical assumptions as researchers ask the question why some places do not develop effective and accountable government or why there is no apparent demand for democracy within a given country or region. What has happened to

²⁷⁹ Knight and Johnson argue that because of the plurality of outcomes generated by particular institutional arrangements none has a presumptive warrant as a first order instrument for coordinating ongoing social interactions in all domains. This gives rise to the second order problem of which institutional form people should rely on in a given context. The contested nature of solutions to collective problems – which institutional form to choose as the distributive logic for allocating benefits and burdens – is the reason democracy is a better system of decision making. Firstly, democracy is superior in its capacity to assess the level of accord between actual and expected conditions if a particular institutional mechanism of distribution is to generate a normatively attractive outcome. Secondly, democracy enables reflexive monitoring of outcomes. Jack Knight and James Johnson. “The Priority of Democracy: A Pragmatist Approach to Political-Economic Institutions and the Burden of Justification” (2007) pp. 47-61.

²⁸⁰ The anti-democratic rhetoric in the Middle East is a particularly prominent example of this phenomena.

them economically, geopolitically or culturally that disrupted the path to the promised land of liberalism?²⁸¹

The specific expectation of modernization theory, that industrialization and economic growth in developing societies would yield changes in the cultural sphere that included secularization and more universal framings of political membership and right, have been confounded by the persistence of religiosity and the seeming increase in the appeal of exclusionary narratives of membership in various parts of the world.²⁸² This study argues that neglect of religion as an independent factor in the development of the modern state and governing ideologies is largely responsible for the failure of prevailing theories to account for increasing religiosity in the Middle East, Africa and Eurasia. The emphasis on economic causality in political development and historical misperceptions regarding secularization that predominate within comparative historical analysis compound the problem of teleology with an idealized point of comparison.

The English toleration debates are a struggle over the nature of the political community and the proper scope of political power. The struggle, and the specifically religious character of the debate are a consequence of the use of religious narratives and institutions by the monarchy to extend its power into the localities. The church became the bureaucratic arm of the state, dramatically increasing its disciplinary capacity and

²⁸¹ Particularly cultural explanations invoked in this debate reveal the imaginative limits of the temporally situated reader. As Casanova argues, before the third wave of democratization demonstrated otherwise many scholars regarded Catholicism as culturally incompatible with democracy. In contemporary debates it is, of course, Islam that does not provide the proper social or dispositional resources to support democratic government (2005).

²⁸² Norris and Inglehart (2004) for example support the classical hypothesis that secularization correlates to improved economic and social conditions which contribute to an increase in existential security and the consequent decline in religiosity.

establishing its immediate relevance to individuals at all levels of society.

The encounter between the centralizing state and the frontiers it was bringing under its purview raised important questions specifically because of the framework within which power was justified. New ideas about religion – those of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, most prominently, but also the Lollard tradition that had existed in England since the 14th century – provided resources through which people could challenge power on its own terms. The monarchy's use of the church to extend its power had two important consequences. It developed a collective identity within England as a Protestant nation through the campaign for religious uniformity and appropriation of religious symbols to legitimize monarchical power. Perhaps more consequentially, the use of coercion to standardize religious practice created a shared experience of institutional power that cut across class and sectarian divisions. The shared frame of membership and language of resistance enabled people to recognize and respond to their common vulnerability to monarchical control over religion. These factors facilitated collective action to restrain the monarchy and a reconceptualization of political authority and obligation.

The English Case

Undoubtedly geopolitical, economic, climactic, and epidemiological factors as well as the beliefs, temperament and the fertility of various monarchs influenced political change during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England. The debates about religious toleration do not provide an exhaustive account even of the origins of liberal toleration, much less of the development of liberalism as a set of governing principles.

What they do provide is a critical account of the ideational shifts that accompany, react to and develop out of the establishment of the modern state as a primary frame of political membership. They provide insight into popular reactions to the standardization of cultural practices as small communities are brought under a common rubric of state regulation that linked them to each other and to the monarchy.

The monarch's appropriation of the church provided it with an established and broadly accepted set of symbols and stories within which to situate its own expanding power. The physical presence of the churches within parish communities and their centrality to social life before the Reformation greatly enhanced the disciplinary capacity and reach of the monarch. Braddick's conceptualization of state development in early modern England as a multi-sited process driven by interactions between ordinary people, local elites and the centralizing government provides a framework for understanding the institutional impact of the church's subordination to the throne. Religion was both a resource for claiming and justifying power and the underlying narrative of political legitimacy that shaped the way people conceived of obligation, entitlement and authority.

Braddick's view of the state enables us to see the conflict over religion as originating in a struggle against standardization of local practices and loss of community autonomy. At the local level Protestantism was a resource for maintaining social discipline and addressing problems arising from social dislocation and poverty. Elizabeth's use of the church to bring the dark corners of the country into the light of the throne created the conditions for collective resistance to Charles several decades later. Common experience of religious persecution was the basis of an alliance against the king that cut across class and sectarian divisions. Protestant identity was initially a resource for

religious dissenters to challenge the state's efforts to standardize national practice through coercion. The intimate link between church and state, the specific cultivation of duty to the monarch as duty to God and the notion of England as an elect nation meant that religious identity and political identity were indistinguishable. Protestantism and the Christian bible to which it gave people access provided shared stories through which people were able to reconceptualize their role within the polity. The idea that people were bearers of divine truth, that God acted in the world through believers, was one of the earliest justifications for political rights. The proper role of the state, in this view, was to provide an arena for people to pursue truth rather than to enforce particular beliefs. This pursuit required open intellectual engagement; rational scrutiny and public debate would sort the truth from error or lies.

After the English Revolution, unity among the rebels fragmented into competition among interpretations of the political requirements of Protestantism. Most regarded shared beliefs and the disciplinary function of the church as an essential aspect of political stability. The state should not impose the *wrong* religion on the polity, but its coercive capacity was indispensable to the Christian commonwealth. Those in this camp retained the sixteenth century concept of the state as responsible for the soul but endorsed a representative government by moral elites. Others sought to preserve the voluntary commitment critical to their concept of Christianity by tolerating a diversity of religious practices, but they still saw an important role for the state in propagating Christian doctrine. A third group saw the state as having no proper role in regulating spiritual life. They derived an array of entitlements from the divine covenant and charged the godly with an activist role in government accountability. Those who accepted the monarch's

control over the church and its established practices lost their power and livelihood at this point.

The Restoration parliament institutionalized the differences among these groups by granting legal priority to the Anglican practices, much as Elizabeth and Charles I had done in mandating use of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Anglican establishment did not try to ground its authority in truth, and in fact saw truth claims as inherently destabilizing to the political realm. The doctrine of indifferency, which held that matters about which there is no direct instruction from God are left to human discretion, gave the state wide authority over religious practice. This was ultimately a collective ideology that retained scholastic framings of reason and conscience as the capacity to reconcile one's self to the law.

The doctrine of indifferency shaped Anglican arguments for religious exclusion in terms of reason of state. The Church of England did not claim to have the true religion nor did it assert that this was the only acceptable form of religious practice. It claimed only that the *Book of Common Prayer* was the best religion for the English people given their shared history. Those who opposed its requirements were considered hostile to the collective from whose tradition the practices had evolved. Recognizing a liberty of conscience would destroy the cohesion and stability of the polity in their view. Collective will authorized the law. If conscience based exceptions to its authority were allowed there would be no limit on the claims that might be laid against it.

Tolerationists and advocates of liberty of conscience pitched their arguments in the same terms and consequently the debate turned almost entirely to the question of what was best for the commonwealth. They argued that religious persecution destroyed the

English economy and made the country vulnerable to foreign invasion. They condemned persecution as a practice unworthy of a Protestant nation. It destroyed the country's moral authority with respect to other nations and eroded the tradition of protections from arbitrary power that were the birthright of every Englishman. By constraining the debate to *raison d'état* the doctrine of indifferency helped to put the nature and purpose of the commonwealth at the fore of arguments. In the context of the economic and security functions of the state religious persecution was clearly an impractical and destructive policy. The debates increasingly recognized the ineliminable differences among people and the intractable character of group attachments and religious beliefs. Persecution emboldened people and strengthened their convictions however mistaken they might be. The state's interest was better served by persuasion than coercion.

The struggle for religious toleration in England culminated in the overthrow of another king and the establishment of liberal restraints on the exercise of monarchical power. The *Declaration of Rights*, presented to William and Mary as a condition of their assuming the throne in 1689, established the monarchy as an instrument of the English people. The document established protestant confession as a requirement of the office and articulated 13 positive rights that limited the exercise of monarchical power. The *Declaration of Rights* drew its authority from what it claimed to be an ancient tradition of rights extending back to the *Magna Charta*. Among the powers it codified are the specific prerogatives of Parliament with respect to the law, taxes, and raising an army; free elections; the right of Protestants to bear arms; freedom of speech and debate within Parliament and procedural protections of citizens from excessive or arbitrary punishment and the right to a fair trial.

The relatively peaceful overthrow of James II, and creation of a limited monarchy through the *Declaration of Rights* represent the instantiation of the principle of popular sovereignty and constitutional restraint of the exercise of political power. The immediate motivation for the replacement of James II was the fact that he was Catholic, but the rhetorical terms through which it was justified were a consequence of over a century of debate about the role and scope of political power within a Protestant identity. The move to restrain the monarchy won support even among Anglicans, whose institutional power had traditionally been closely tied to the throne. The discursive construction of the state as the custodian of a Protestant commonwealth was a critical factor in the success of this revolution, which Lois Schwoerer described having “accomplished more of lasting importance than any other revolution in England or Europe in the early modern era” (3).²⁸³

The *Act of Toleration* in 1689 was not a recognition of a fundamental right to liberty of conscience but as a tactical move to secure the support of dissenters in replacing the pro-toleration, but unfortunately Catholic, James II. William III appears to have personally supported the idea of toleration and some scholars have argued that his ambitions for toleration in England were only partially realized. However, the bi-partisan support for the bill that took nearly three decades to achieve was due not to principle but

²⁸³ Schwoerer is not merely espousing the Whig view, which characterized these events as a triumph of liberal principles over autocracy and traces the origins of the 1832 Reform Act to this critical juncture. Her work is a careful analysis of the impact of the rhetoric employed in justifying these reforms as a continuation and codification of English tradition rather than the innovation that it actually was. She argues that even historians who were temporally close to the events accepted the idea that nothing really changed. Looking at the period before these events demonstrate that there is a radical shift in the institutionalization of power that is a consequence of reconceptualization of the state theoretically and consideration of the means to ensure that it serves the new purpose.

the fact that in the eyes of the Protestant establishment the religious dissenters were far less dangerous than a Catholic monarch. Paradoxically, liberal principles of government were a consequence of the ascendance of an exclusionary narrative of membership.

The debate about the nature, scope and governance of the political community from the end of the sixteenth century through the *Act of Toleration* (1689) cannot be attributed to the Protestant Reformation or a particular form of Protestant asceticism. The Reformation did introduce new cultural resources for generating and claiming political power in the early sixteenth century but the critical factor in the transformation of the popular relationship to politics that occurred through religion was its use as a nationalizing narrative. It is not Protestantism *per se* that provoked these changes but conflict between the use of the church as a vehicle for promoting uniformity and the plurality of religious practice upon which the expanding state encroached. Religion was not only a response to changes in social organization but a critical feature of their execution.

Bringing Religion Back In

Despite his responsibility for one of the most misleading books about the relationship between religion and politics, Samuel Huntington is also among the most helpful scholars in recognizing its consequentiality. *Political Order in Changing Societies* suggests that the context of modernization is a critical factor in how social and economic changes influence political development. The strength of the state as an organizing principle of political life, determines whether the enhanced economic, educational and communicative capacity of individuals and social networks that are a

consequence of modernity²⁸⁴ are directed toward the state in a coordinated demand for political inclusion or against it in competition for control over resources. The state is an important condition of the existence and effectiveness of demands for democratization. Thus how it became a cognitive and material reality as the arbiter of relations among people is an important component of comparative analysis.

Huntington doesn't try to answer this problem but the conceptualization of culture in his other work avails us of few tools to consider the sources of ideational shifts. He takes the features of cultural narratives as static, dispositionally determinative scripts that prescribe the range of action among people. His idea that the secular state was possible in the Christian world because a distinction between spiritual and political authority was present from the beginning demonstrates the error in cultural analysis that Barrington Moore identifies in his classic work *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*:

Cultural values do not descend from heaven to influence the course of history... To explain behavior in terms of cultural behavior is to engage in circular reasoning. If we notice that a landed aristocracy resists commercial enterprise, we do not *explain* this fact by stating that the aristocracy has done so in the past or even that it is the carrier of certain traditions that make it hostile to such activities: the problem is to determine out of what past and present experiences such an outlook arises and maintains itself (1966:486).

For Moore the relevant experiences of a group are economic, and the causal force in political change is the alignment of particular groups to protect those interests. Values are an important aspect of his explanation of how interests are understood and which alliances are formed. Values are not merely the environment of political contest however,

²⁸⁴ These ideas are articulated in Lipset, Seymour Martin. *Political Man* (1960) and in "The Social Requisites of Democracy" (1959). The most recent (and compelling) variant on this theory is that of Carl Boix in *Democracy and Redistribution* (2003) and Carl Boix and Susan Stokes in "Endogenous Democratization" (2003). They argue that relative equality in the distribution of wealth matters more than aggregate social wealth.

they are a reflection of concrete interests and privileges that are served by indoctrination, education and processes of transmission (1966:486-7). Moore's analysis is far more nuanced than the twitter version that democracy needs capitalism and capitalism needs a middle class. Moore actually attributes the direction of development to the alliances among groups within a state. The governing ideology that prevails in each of his cases depends upon the available discourses of power and the strength of the coalitions that support them. His analysis highlights the importance of the "tool kit" of options and how the relations among groups are negotiated but he leaves these questions to others to answer. Where ideas come from, how particular scripts come to be options as narratives of power, or how those ideas shape perception of institutional options as serving interests is beyond the scope of his study.

Moore also takes the bounded unit of political membership as given and does not consider the relationship between the state and the success of particular governing ideologies. Theda Skocpol amended this by demonstrating that state capacity was critical to the success of demands for the redistribution of power but her concern is also with existing states and their impact on revolution rather than their potential co-development with ideational traditions.²⁸⁵ State strength is clearly a factor in the outcomes of

²⁸⁵ In the famous Skocpol-Sewell debate, republished in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (1994), Skocpol describes her commitment to structural explanations, which Sewell finds insufficient on their own to explain political change. Skocpol is primarily concerned with state capacity to maintain order as a function of both domestic and international factors. Sewell's notion of culture in this context as "constitutive of social order," hence of its capacity for transformation and as a condition that is reflexively tied to the material and semiotic transformation that it generates, has no place in her analysis. She asserts, "as a comparative historical sociologist... I continue to believe that struggles over the organization and uses of state power are at the heart of all revolutionary transformations." p. 208. Sewell's concept of culture has more explanatory purchase with respect to the conditions through which social actors generate

challenges to state power, but the prior question of how people understand the order and operation of political power, what they expect from it and imagine as its possibilities remains unanswered. The literature on state formation generated by Skocpol's work describes the factors that facilitated the development of the territorial state but there is little attention to changes in the conceptual organization of power and membership.

The English case demonstrates the appropriation of existing religious resources of power by an emerging sovereign state. Elizabeth I's efforts to standardize existing diversity and bring autonomous spheres of life under the mantle of monarchical power significantly increased the administrative capacity of the state. The infrastructure of the church provided the crown with the means to reinforce its centrality to political life through politically inflected sermons, taxes, and required church attendance. The monarchy tapped into what Gellner called the "cultural machinery" of sixteenth century society and directed its resources toward consolidating its own power. Including religion in analysis of state development illuminates sources of state strength that elide measures concerned exclusively with geopolitical power (Gorski 2003). But it also makes clear that the process of state consolidation was fraught with ideological competition, engendered by the state's encroachment upon the autonomy of self-organized communities.

Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam's work on contentious politics provides some assistance in identifying the processes through which macro structural

revolutionary change, and how prior events influence the subsequent range of interpretations available to political actors. Skocpol approaches explanation through macro-structural causes. Sewell, on the other hand, is interested in the way cultures are progressively reshaped in the context of revolutionary events and the impact of those changes on the schemas through which individuals assess their options. See Skocpol, "A Rejoinder to Sewell," and Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case," in Skocpol 1994.

change is linked to popular agency.²⁸⁶ They understand the evolution of modern political systems as a consequence of an ongoing struggle for power between aspirant rulers and those over whom they sought control. They put aside the problem of where ideas come from or how the perception of interests changes, by defining popular agency as a dynamic energy within the political system. Creative response to situations is a given, the puzzle is how responses generate sufficient collective support to demand change. Their concept of contention for power as an ever present aspect or potential of human relations informs a focus on the conditions that favor its expression or success in explanations of political change. Demands for political inclusion, for example, become evident when conditions facilitate the consolidation of contentious actors into a full blown political conflict. The basic ontology of the social is competing collective actors; previous winners become the focal point for subsequent challenges, and so on. Change proceeds through conflict. Success shapes both expectations of the execution of power and the mode of challenge to it. Tarrow uses the example of bread riots in Paris to demonstrate that the monarchy became the object of popular frustration because it had assumed responsibility for supplying Paris with bread in order to ensure stability.²⁸⁷ Similarly, ethnicity became a justification for group autonomy when it became a discourse of political control, something Tilly argues did not occur until the late 18th century. The origins of the ethnic nation as a frame of political membership are in the projection of imperial power through imposition of language and culture.

²⁸⁶ *Dynamics of Contention* (2001).

²⁸⁷ Jefferson apparently understood this dynamic as well given his comment in a letter to James Madison from France, "Never was there a country where the practice of governing too much had taken deeper root and done more mischief" (Paris, August 28, 1789). From *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Washington, D.C.: Riker, Taylor & Maury, 1854:97.

During the seventeenth century, religion played a similar role in fostering conflict and justifying claims to political autonomy because at that time religion, rather than ethnicity, was the authorizing discourse of power. Resistance in the early modern period tends to fall beneath the radar of contemporary observers because of its religious language. In conjunction with the claim to longevity of practice as a strategy for innovation during the seventeenth century, the religious frame in which contention occurred obscures the fact that it represented a significant popular demand for the redistribution of power. Decoupling religion from narratives of secularization and modernization and looking at its actual impact on political processes demonstrates the emergence of nationalism much earlier than commonly understood. In England, the state used religion to cultivate a common frame of membership as a project of political power. Popular deployment of this identity then became the basis of political contention in the early seventeenth century. The English case renders the formation of a national political identity observable independent of the discourse of language and culture through which such identities were propagated in the nineteenth century. It also promotes a more dynamic view of human agency in shaping the course of political development by demonstrating the longevity of political resistance. Ethnic justifications for political independence were also informed by the prior existence of territorially bounded administrative units of power, whose legitimacy and membership were tied to religion.

In his later writing Tilly confronts the power of identity and social boundaries in forming collectives and motivating action. He argues that people are linked relationally through narratives that tie an individual's action and fate to a group whose survival becomes the basis for an individual's action. Culture intervenes in a critical way to

construct action and interests in these explanations as Tilly tries to link individual level phenomena to macro-structural change. The state, ethnicity or religious community are all groups that might generate conditions for collective action through narratives that impose an obligation on individuals through their investment in the group's flourishing. In these explanations of the processes through which individual decisions become a collective force, culture intervenes in a critical way to construct interest or as a tool individuals might use to pursue their own ends or get others to work in cooperation with them. Tilly's focus shifts from the emphasis on the structural factors that facilitate the expression of an ever present contentious impulse in his work on contentious politics with Tarrow and McAdam (2001), to the conditions through which an effective collective might form and conceptualize a problem as a motive for action. If the success of a collective requires convergence around a narrative of shared fate and the importance of an individual to the collective realization of a shared goal, then the cultural aspects of the environment in which contention is expressed are critical to its realization. A semiotic circularity governs the relationship between narratives and the ends they facilitate. In one respect narratives are a resource that people can manipulate toward particular ends, but those ends are often determined by the narratives themselves. The expression of contention then becomes linked to the repertoires of contention developed to coordinate people and motivate them to act. The ideological milieu in which contention occurs, in which particular changes converge in large scale political demands, is thus an important aspect of the outcome. In some respects it is determinative.

Tilly's conclusions about identity suggest the importance of the cultural opportunity structure in political contention. The resources available for mobilizing

people against status quo power relations are a critical aspect of collective action, which is in turn essential to political resistance or demands for change. The collective theoretical contributions of Tilly and Tarrow in particular support Huntington's perspective that the prior existence of the state, and the manner and effectiveness with which it wields power shape whether and how it becomes the object of challenges. The impact of the state is not merely the institutionalized power relations but the discursive construction of its role and popular expectations that arise from the narratives it employs to maintain power.

Tilly's work on identity highlights the fact that all identities are not political. They become so only when governments become parties to them by using them as a tool of control or when they become the basis of collective demands (2005:210). Rogers Smith also makes the claim that the construction of an identity is in dynamic relation to the political forms and activities toward which it is oriented (2004). Religious identity in early modern England would not have been the source of resistance to the state if the state had not rendered them political by controlling religious expression. Nor would conflict among different religious groups have arisen if religion were not the basis for preferential treatment by the state. Furthermore, resistance to religious coercion may not have resulted in robust reconceptualization of the role of the state if Protestantism had not been linked to political identity through a deliberate campaign. Collective resistance to the monarch is motivated by religious persecution on two occasions because he is perceived as a threat to the Protestant narrative of collective membership.

Smith argues that the sense of membership within a community is a political construction. "Stories of peoplehood" as he calls them elsewhere (2003) don't arise

naturally as a result of economic or demographic commonality; they are deliberately crafted by political entrepreneurs and imagined communities through some combination of coercion and persuasion. The dominance of particular identities is a consequence of either a negotiation of conflicting narratives of membership or suppression of contesting identity claims. As both Tilly and Smith's work demonstrates, how members of a particular group understand themselves is consequential for how they act as individuals to support or challenge the group and how they are able to coordinate the actions of their groups to formulate and pursue common goals.

In the English case conflict within the dominant stories of identity created opportunities to develop new narratives of membership. For example, advocates of the state church resolved the contradiction between the Protestant emphasis on individual experience and a voluntary commitment of faith, and the requirement of standard religious practice across England through the doctrine of indifferency. This in turn made the English state its own point of reference and justification. The history and customs of the English people replaced divine truth as the foundation of the English law. This concept of the state later became the basis for narratives of political membership grounded in common interests rather than in religious practice. The rhetorical construction of the state as an autonomous *secular* (worldly) entity – albeit one sustained by a common religious practice – was a means of justifying conformity necessitated by competing interpretations of the doctrine the monarchy was adapting to its purpose. It grew out of a response to people who resisted centralized control of the church on the grounds that their own consciences and scriptural interpretations required something other than what the state church demanded.

The Leveller argument for separation of church and state is another example of the generation of new ways of understanding political relationships that emerged from competition over the dominant narrative of political identity. These people embraced a Protestant identity but they understood it to require the pursuit of truth at the collective and individual level. Their interpretation rejected both the requirements of the state church and its mandate to regulate religious practice. The state's effort to contain religious nonconformity politicized their claims by encroaching upon their ability to live in accordance with their beliefs. This conflict prompted them to claim the right to religious practice on scriptural grounds. They claimed a sphere of action independent from the state on the basis of their understanding of Christianity as mandating the pursuit of truth in the world through intellectual and emotional engagement. Truth required open exchange among people and thus freedom of speech, the press, association and conscience were divinely ordained.

Three lessons from the English case support the emerging literature on the power of identity in political change. First, the discourse of power shapes the discourse of resistance. The narratives around which people mobilize in demand for power must be interpreted in relation to the power they are challenging in order to understand the nature of their political claims. Furthermore, attention to the systems of justification and social organization within nonliberal states can provide a clue to potential sources of movement for political inclusion and effective frames of action. Second, identities constructed by a centralizing authority as a mechanism of power can create cultural opportunities for effective demands for redistribution of power. Third, identities and interests become politicized when there is a change in their relationship to power. Religious liberty became

an issue in early modern England only when state recognition of diverse religious practice was essential to their survival.

The English case also demonstrates that religion played a critical role in the establishment of the modern state as a focal point of political power and a frame of political relationships. Religion did not quietly retreat with the advent of urbanization and the breakdown of feudal organization but became an active force in shaping social life. Its symbolic and institutional resources served the project of state building by enhancing the bureaucratic capacity and institutional reach of the English state. Christian narratives were also a means through which communities organized themselves to address social problems arising from inflation, population increase and the consequent decline of institutions of social control. They were powerful narratives of membership that enabled the construction of an imagined community at the level of the English territorial state. But they were also the basis of powerful voluntary identities through which people claimed the right to act in accordance with their beliefs or in the best interest of their communities.

Three discourses of state emerged from the toleration debates that are largely a consequence of competing realms of authority and the attempt to define the nature of the political community: 1) The state as a finite agent of positive power authorized by tradition and its effectiveness in maintaining political stability. The vestment of power in the state and the primacy of tradition in determining policy are premised on uncertainty. Justice is the evolved perspective of the people, the “common sense” of good men. 2) The state should facilitate the truth’s emergence in the world by maintaining civil peace. Uncertainty regarding the truth requires open communication and individual freedom to

pursue it. Progressive change is possible through individual freedom to act as agents of divine will. The movement toward truth requires a standard of justice external to the state against which the execution of power can be assessed. 3) The state as an active enforcer of a vision of truth apprehended by moral elites. In this view the truth is knowable if not readily accepted by the majority of people. The state should be a servant to a properly discerned truth in order to provide the coercion necessary to bring it into being.

The first and the second of these concepts of the state are compatible with what Tilly describes as “protected consultations”²⁸⁸ to greater or lesser degrees. The first is the narrative of the state embraced by the Anglican establishment. Structurally it defines classical conservatism and, not surprisingly, it poses problems for progressive change. Since political legitimacy proceeds from practice this ideology resists deepening democratization because it provides few tools for innovation. The second, which is the classical liberal view poses problems for coping with political radicalism and diverse opinions and ideas: how can they be constituted in a single polity? How can a state protect a common interest in autonomy from those whose truth motivates them to seek control over others? In the English case the problem has an additional level of circularity in that the fear of dissidents disrupting political stability motivated the dominant class to enact persecutory policies. These policies then undermined the benefit the dissidents derived from integration within the collective. The solution to the problem of diversity thus created actual conditions to incite resistance.

Coercive efforts to create ideological unity and establish state mandates as prior to

²⁸⁸ Tilly describes a ‘protected consultation’ as broad and equal citizenship, a binding consultation of citizens over policy makers and protection of citizens from arbitrary state action. See Charles Tilly, “Processes and Mechanisms of Democratization” (2000).

those of the group or individual conscience fostered competition for control of the state because, from the point of view of dissenters, such control was the only way to secure their existing practices. Persecution confirmed for some dissidents that the state was controlled by infidels and the only way to fulfill their divine obligation was to seize its power. They challenged the particular doctrines and rituals that were being imposed through the state church but not its authority in controlling this aspect of life. The power was legitimate, it was merely in the wrong hands. The third view of the state was in a sense a shadow of the justification of religious uniformity. It sought the same ends but on different and less negotiable grounds. The idea of truth was an effective means of constituting a voluntary collective but it provided no room for diversity of opinion or dissent. Early advocates of separation of church and state wanted to maintain the primacy of voluntary communities, which would function according to the logic of this third view of the state, as the sword of the moral elite in a project for reform. For them one of the essential reasons for separating the two types of authority was to maintain the purity of the religious community. Religion could guide and inspire reform but it could not govern because when it did so it was inevitably instrumentalized toward a particular interest.

Hobbes and Locke are often indicted by critics of liberalism for premising their arguments on an idealized notion of individuality because they do not account for the fact that people are embedded in networks of interdependent social relations. But if one reads Hobbes and Locke with respect to their intervention in an ongoing debate about political authority and membership they look rather different. They are attempting to reconcile the conflicting claims between voluntary communities and the state as an overarching narrative of membership. The individual is a category that for Hobbes overcomes the

power of religious narrative to justify resistance to civil authority. By casting participation in the state in terms of individual benefit, he discredits competing centers of power. The purpose of the state is to enhance individual security, to protect people from their neighbors and provide them with a more predictable, peaceful life. Communal networks – generally religious organizations – are ultimately a source of instability because they provide no coordinated means of containing human drives beyond their own boundaries. Peace requires that all such groups be subordinated to a larger structure of authority to protect them from the potential militancy of any single group. For Hobbes, groups are clearly powerful factors in shaping human life; the strength of their influence is the central political problem of his time. He is theorizing a solution to the problem that Tilly describes as “integrating trust networks”²⁸⁹ by asserting the ultimate authority of the civil state over local attachments.

Locke has a different project but one still very much concerned with the dynamic between the state and sub-state membership. He articulates the rights of the individual as a bulwark against state intrusion upon property and conscience in the name of religious uniformity. Locke posits the individual – rather than the group – as the unit of political incorporation to challenge the conception of political membership in terms of the religious practices of a single group. The state, he argued, should protect people equally rather than accord priority to a particular group. The Anglican church should be treated like any other voluntary association; the resources of the state should not be directed toward securing its ideological predominance.

²⁸⁹ See Tilly, Charles. “Trust and Rule,” *Theory and Society* (2004).

The early modern period can be a resource for considering the operation of political power in the context of contemporary emerging states. The historical problem of projecting backward an idea of the state as a fixed center of power creates a false impression and misses the political process of formation as an interaction between an expanding state and the existing social order. A similar problem is present in analyzing African “states” that are only partly consolidated or have a weak capacity to project power.

The English case is instructive for developing states because it offers analogous conditions from the point of view of state consolidation or capacity, from which we might assess problems that arise as a result of competing centers for power, or the difficulties with integrating trust networks and establishing legitimacy for an expanding center of political authority. But it is also an example of the rise of mass politics and the ideologies that emerged from the participation of ordinary people in debates about the means and purposes of government. Liberal ideas and their implementation as the principles of government developed out of a specific set of conditions that included a finite frame of political membership and a justifying discourse that provided a standard for the exercise of civil power. Rights require a defined community that authorizes political power and polices its use. Behind a collective sufficient to claim power or wrest it from some other interest is a shared understanding of membership that defines the people who will bear those rights.

Concluding Thoughts

The propagation of Islam as a narrative of political identity and social control in

African states is often regarded as a troubling development from the standpoint of human rights, particularly the rights of women. The resemblance of Islam to Christianity as both a universalizing discourse and the authorizing narrative of empire invite comparison between this contemporary use of Islam and role of religion in the development of liberalism in the early modern period. The English case indicates that the prospects for movement in the direction of a protected consultation should focus on the conditions of collective action within a society, rather than whether or not they are framed in religious terms. As scholars of the Middle East have observed, the use of “democracy” to demarcate identity boundaries can be an asset to authoritarian regimes. The construction of democracy as a western concept and its association with imperialism and an array of social ills can prevent people from endorsing it..

Within the semiotic field of some authoritarian regimes, the construction of democracy as anti-Islam is hegemonic, thus democracy has little power as a symbolic tool of resistance. Challenges to authoritarianism may have to be framed through Islamic symbols and discourses to generate sufficient popular support and to draw upon the strength of Islamic networks to generate collective action. The question of whether Islam is compatible with liberal democracy, whether it fosters social institutions that are inimical to liberal principles, is erroneously approached through the idea that Christianity advanced its own relegation from the political realm. The processes through which liberal ideas developed out of religious narratives of political authority and membership are instructive to thinking about the relationship of Islam to political development, but less in terms of doctrinal compatibility than from the point of view of the development of state capacity and supporting narratives of membership.

Liberal ideas and proto-liberal institutions developed out of religious narratives because they were the locus of individual experience of state power and the terms of political justification. Religion in the early modern period was the source of identity construction and institutional discipline in a changing society. It constituted both a bottom up process of local response to problems of social order, and a top down project of nation building and centralization of political power. The monarchy situated its own expanding power within the medieval discourse of political power by grounding its authority in transcendent terms. But the monarchy's attempt to establish itself as the sole arbiter of those terms in the political realm led to conflicts with communities that were reluctant to forsake their self-determined practices and beliefs.

The authoritarian religious state has its modern secular variant in communist and fascist ideology. These states are different from medieval and early modern states in their capacity to enact their ambitions to control hearts and minds for the purpose of promoting political conformity, and realize their expectations of politically homogenous (or quiescent) communities. But while the available technologies of power distinguish them, they are alike in the notion that the people within a polity serve a specific ideology, that truth is publicly designated and the measure of public reason is the ability to recognize publicly declared truth as such. The role of the individual is to reproduce a centrally established discourse, rather than to hold power accountable on the basis of critical engagement with public issues. They further share the assumption that governmental purview extends fully over the bodies and beliefs of citizens.

One aspect of change from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one is a broadening of the interests represented in the management of collective resources. The

willingness of a particular group of elites to relax the boundaries of membership are plausibly explained by Dahl's model of a change in the calculus of repression and inclusion. Elites would be particularly willing to extend political participation if they were able to secure their economic and political privilege despite expansion of the franchise. The transformation to a liberal regime, however, requires a more critical change in the relationship between government and citizen. It requires an understanding of government as a means to resolve collective problems. A liberal state further requires a view of the collective as comprised of individuals whose unique interests, abilities and personal choices should be maximized as part of the definition of the collective good that is being served. This type of change puts the nature of the political community at the fore.

In the seventeenth century, Protestant theology advanced the notion that individuals within self-organizing communities would best realize the public good. People were the agents of divine revelation and the advance of justice in the world. This important mission could only be fulfilled through religious autonomy, and the supporting freedoms of speech, the press and association. If God spoke through ordinary people, public discourse must be unconstrained, lest his word be suppressed and its bearers persecuted. Transparency and public exposure to religious ideas would best determine their truth value. Doubt rather than certainty was the guiding principle of public discourse. If the truth could not be known definitively, public life should be structured in order to maximize the conditions for its emergence.. But this liberal narrative stood in competition with a view that the state required confessional homogeneity in order to ensure civil peace. The liberal view ultimately became the guiding ideology in several of the American colonies, and informed the establishment of liberty of conscience in the

United States. The view of the state as a source of moral development and discipline also informed political communities in the American colonies, however. It is the source of the continued tension in United States political culture between the responsibility of the community to craft and sustain the morality of its members and the individual right to liberty of conscience. In England, tradition rather than the conditions of progress grounded political authority. The rights claimed by seventeenth century radicals came to be protected in the establishment of the *Declaration of Rights* but without their grounding in divinity. They were retro-fitted into a claimed tradition of rights that was rhetorically constructed in resistance to monarchical encroachment upon religious practice.

Developing states in many cases face the task of integrating trust networks and bringing multiple centers of political power into a single conceptual frame. They require the formation of an effective political collective to demand that power is used toward the common good. Historically, exclusionary narratives of membership, particularly religion and ethnicity have played an important role in the rhetorical construction of the state as a center of political power and in demands for just and accountable government. Rights developed out of claims by self-defined groups of people as a means of resisting and regulating the exercise of political authority.

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