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A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Dissent and Republicanism after the Restoration.

DURING the first half of the seventeenth century political parties were described by ecclesiastical rather than by political terms. The men who opposed Charles I in 1640 were known as Puritans and Presbyterians. Those who executed him were more often described as Independents than as Republicans. The same confusion persisted after 1660. Anglicans could not subscribe to the doctrine of Roger Williams, that every man should be free to save his soul according to his liking, because they thought that those who differed from them in religious matters had political ideals incompatible with loyalty to the Crown. To clergy who had been driven from their rectories and to squires who had tasted the bitterness of exile, dissent and republicanism were synonymous terms. As from the sects had proceeded the sufferings of the Anglicans, they inevitably became the victims of a blind, fierce, fanatic intolerance. It was only to be expected that the sectaries would be regarded as waiting a fitting opportunity to recover their lost lands and church preferments.

Burnet divides the nonconformists into four groups and naively assigns political opinions to each. The Presbyterians, he says, "liked civil government and limited monarchy." The Independents he describes as republicans because they put all power in the hands of the congregation. According to his unsupported testimony they were the republicans of 1688.¹ James II repeated with wearisome reiteration that the dissenters were commonwealthsmen.² Jenkins, in 1680, thought that the dissenters were working for a republic,³ while after the Rye House plot Ormonde⁴ and Sprat⁵ noted that "most if not all the meaner sort that are engaged are observed to be Anabaptists or Independents." Foreigners judged the relations between dissent and republicanism to be intimate and close. Cominges⁶ and the *Rotterdam Gazette*⁷ described the sectaries as averse to kingly government. Preachers from their pulpits commented on the same phenomenon. Dr. South thought that the Presbyterians

¹ Burnet, iii. 161.

² Clarke, "James II" i. 46; Macpherson, S. P. i. 21, 38; Savile—Foljambe MSS. H.M.C. Rep. xv. App. v. 130, 131.

³ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1680-1. 36.

⁴ H.M.C. Ormonde MSS. (N.S.) vii. 65.

⁵ True Account of the Horrid Conspiracy (1686).

⁶ Jusserand, "An Ambassador at the Court of Charles II" 115-116.

⁷ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1667. 294.

were still bound by their Covenant to repeat their attack on monarchy.⁸ Samuel Parker, not content with sermonising in the pulpit, told the world in print "that princes may with less hazard give liberty to men's vices . . . than their consciences," and attributed political doctrines to the dissenters which he thought justified a denunciation of their "turbulent temper of mind."⁹

A majority of the gentry were no more willing than the incumbents to follow Marvell's advice to Parker, and "let all those things of former times alone."¹⁰ Daniel Fleming hoped "His Majesty will ever remember King James's adage, no bishop, no king."¹¹ In Devon the justices at the Quarter Sessions, following the discovery of the Rye House plot, solemnly recorded that the nonconformist preachers were "the authors and fomenters of this pestilent faction."¹² The men who executed the penal laws listened with approval when Clarendon attacked the dissenting clergy as "trumpets of war and incendiaries towards rebellion."¹³ That the dissenters were ostensibly persecuted from political motives may be proved from the Statute book. The authors of the Conventicle Acts speak of "disloyal persons who under pretence of tender consciences have or may at their meetings contrive insurrections (as late experience has shown)." The "Five Mile" Act struck at ministers who "distil the poisonous principles of schism and rebellion into the hearts of His Majesty's subjects." In short, as Halifax recorded in 1687, "It is not long since . . . the maxim was, it is impossible for a dissenter not to be a rebel."¹⁴

As long as nonconformity was regarded as an explosive political force, the dissenters could not hope to obtain legal recognition of their moral right to worship in their own way. The memories of the Interregnum were the ghosts which headed the ruling classes along the road they followed and could always be used as an unanswerable argument against those who would respect "tender consciences." The blame for the persecutions must be attributed not to the King, but to the bishops and Parliament.¹⁵ Much of the intolerance of Sheldon and his subor-

⁸ Sermons, i. 436.

⁹ A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity. Preface p. lxv. 145-50, etc.

¹⁰ Works, iii. 178.

¹¹ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1668/9. 321.

¹² Hamilton, "Quarter Sessions" 188-96.

¹³ Parl. Hist. iv. 184, 207.

¹⁴ Letter to a Dissenter. Foxcroft, "Life of Halifax," ii. 376.

¹⁵ Lyon Turner, "Orig. Records of Nonconformity," iii. 36-42. John Nicholas to Sir Edw. Nicholas, March 14th, 1667/8. "The King if he pleases may take a right measure of our temper by this and leave off crediting the undertakers who persuade him that the generality of the kingdom and of our house too, is inclined to toleration." Eg. MS. 2539, f. 170. See also f. 215.

dinates no doubt sprang from the same cause as that of Laud had done, a passion for unity and seemliness in ecclesiastical affairs. But the political motive, if weak at Lambeth, was strong at Westminster, and axiomatic in the minds of the men who ruled rural England.

The term, nonconformist, was used to describe all who did not subscribe to the doctrinal practices and standards of the Anglicans. It is not to be understood, in the sense often given to it by contemporaries, as denoting a body of men inseparably united. The Anglican clergy from the Olympian heights of comfortable livings affected to discern no difference between the Presbyterians and the millenary enthusiasts whom Cromwell had been forced to silence. The number of sects was less during the reign of Charles II than in the days when Ephraim Paget¹⁶ and "Gangraena" Edwards had compiled frenzied catalogues of heterodox opinions.¹⁷ The Bishops in their replies to Sheldon's circulars¹⁸ enumerate four main groups—Presbyterians, Independents or Congregationalists, Anabaptists or Baptists, and Quakers. The few references to Fifth Monarchy Men, Sabbatarians, Freewillers and Muggletonians proves their rarity. We can best determine to what extent the nonconformists were attached to republican ideals by considering each group separately.

One of the difficulties that the student of seventeenth-century history meets is that of assigning to party labels the exact shade of meaning they ought to bear. The degrading of Presbyterianism to the precarious position of a proscribed sect was accompanied by an extension of meaning to the term. It was used to denote all that the word Puritanism had meant earlier. When Father Orleans tells us that Shaftesbury filled Parliament with Presbyterians, he only means, as Calamy points out, that the members were not High Churchmen or "for favouring the papists."¹⁹ Rapin complains that although the Presbyterians and the Sects did not make one body, because their enemies were pleased to give them one name, the former had to suffer the consequences of the actions of men with whom they had no connection.²⁰ Even if a distinction were drawn between the Presbyterians and other nonconformist bodies, their opponents could argue that the late troubles "bubbled up" in Presbyterian pulpits and that, therefore, they were responsible for all that had happened since "forty-one." Baxter even found it necessary

¹⁶ Heresiography. May, 1645.

¹⁷ Gangraena, pts. 1, 2, 3, Feb., May, Dec., 1646.

¹⁸ Lyon Turner, i. *passim*.

¹⁹ Revolution d'Angleterre (1695) iii. 351: Rutt, "Life of Calamy,"

i. 85.

²⁰ History, ii. 627.

were still bound by their Covenant to repeat their attack on monarchy.⁸ Samuel Parker, not content with sermonising in the pulpit, told the world in print "that princes may with less hazard give liberty to men's vices . . . than their consciences," and attributed political doctrines to the dissenters which he thought justified a denunciation of their "turbulent temper of mind."⁹

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to defend them from the charge that all dissenters had a hand in the King's death.²¹

Royalist attacks on the Presbyterians appeared on the book-stalls before the return of the King. *The Grand Rebels Detected, or the Presbyter Unmasked*,²² contained extensive quotations from their political guide, Buchanan. In July, 1660, Thomas Tomkins reviewed Baxter's *Holy Commonwealth* and called his book *The Rebels' Plea*.²³ The most virulent criticisms came fittingly enough from the pen of L'Estrange. From the Restoration to the Revolution he harped on one theme, the Presbyterians were enemies of monarchy, and never tired of repeating that "the independents murdered Charles Stuart but the presbyterians kill'd the king."²⁴ His ill-timed censures on the men who had made possible the King's return were disliked at Court, however acceptable they may have been to Cavaliers whose petitions for employment remained unanswered. In the *Relapsed Apostate* he speaks of having been asked "to hold my hand," but to justify publication wrote, "my crime is not the raking into pardon'd actions" but "exposing relapses and discovering new combinations."²⁵ As a supplement to the *Relapsed Apostate* he published about the same time²⁶ *State Divinity in Notes upon some late Presbyterian Pamphlets*. Despite the protest that he had discovered "new combinations," the tract was in the main "a scandalous recital of their old forgeries." In the next year appeared the *Memento directed to all those that truly reverence the memory of King Charles the Martyr*.²⁷ He once more repeats the history of Presbyterianism, and refers to the damning fact that in 1660 they had hoped to limit the powers of the King.

More scholarly than these diatribes of L'Estrange was a posthumous tract which appeared in 1663 called "*Philanax Anglicus, or a Christian Caveat for all kings . . . showing plainly . . . that it is impossible to be at the same time presbyterians and not rebels.*"²⁸

²¹ Reliq. Baxter, iii. 148-9.

²² April, 1660.

²³ The Rebels Plea or Mr. Baxter's Judgement concerning the late Wars (July 25) 1660.

²⁴ State Divinity (1661), 15. Cf. Needham, "Though they (the presbyterians) laid him not down upon the block, yet they brought him to the scaffold." (Case of the Commonwealth Stated (1650) 64-65). See e.g. 1, The Interest Mistaken or the Holy Cheat (1661). A 4th ed. appeared in 1682 (Kitchen. L'Estrange. 413). ii. Relapsed Apostate (1661). 2nd ed. 1681.

²⁵ Relapsed Apostate, advertisement.

²⁶ Nov. 1661.

²⁷ April 1662. 2nd ed. 1682 with a different title. (Kitchen 413).

²⁸ Published by T. B., a brother-in-law of the author.

The author succeeds in making out a case for his conclusion, by tracing the effects of the teaching of Calvin, "Junius Brutus," Knox, Goodman and Buchanan in Holland, England and Scotland. In the same year was published Sir John Birkenhead's *Cabala*, describing an imaginary conference of dissenters at which two ministers were appointed to "observe all the failings of State and report them to a committee appointed to improve and aggravate them."²⁹

That the Presbyterians were the monsters of L'Estrange's imagination is untrue. As a body they were responsible for the Restoration and loyally accepted the non-limitation of the prerogative when this had proved impossible. A paper among the Leeds MSS.³⁰, to select one of many, contains a list of worshippers at Presbyterian conventicles whom even the perjured informers employed by the bishops could not plausibly accuse of assembling for political reasons. Many of the clergy were famous scholars, honoured in their own days as great preachers and efficient pastors. Their interests were primarily theological, not political. The loyalty to the Crown of many of those ejected in 1660 and 1662 had been punished with imprisonment during the Interregnum.³¹ The case of Andrew Parsons illustrates the readiness of the episcopal authorities to discover treason where none was intended. Parsons had joined Sir George Booth in the Royalist rising of 1659, and at the end of 1660 preached a sermon in which he compared the Devil to a King courting the soul. This was held to mean that the King was a devil, and the unfortunate preacher suffered three months' imprisonment before a royal pardon released him.³²

The accusation that the Presbyterians met to plot against the Government cannot be substantiated. Calamy's evidence is nearer the truth. Speaking of the days of his boyhood, he says, "Often I was at their most private meetings for worship, and never did I hear them inveigh against those in power, though they were commonly run down as enemies of royalty. Such men prayed heartily for king and government."³³ Calamy's testimony becomes more significant when it is remembered that he was writing of men who had endured persecution for a quarter of a century.

The description of the opponents of the second Stuart despotism as Presbyterians, however, is to some extent intelligible.

²⁹ *Cabala, or an Impartial Account of the Nonconformist's private designs.* 29.

³⁰ H.M.C. Rep. xi. App. vii. 15.

³¹ See e.g. the account of Joshua Kirby in Bryan Dale, "Yorkshire Puritans," 93-95.

³² Lyon Turner, iii. 303-4, 372-3.

³³ Life, i. 88-9.

The "Five Mile" Act imposed a political test, the famous "Oxford Oath." Dr. Bates and Dr. Jacomb subscribed, but the vast majority refused, not because they were republicans, but because they would not tie their hands in unforeseen contingencies.³⁴ They could only bind themselves to obey the lawful commands of the King. A few, for example, Philip Henry,³⁵ were prepared to swear not to alter the civil government, but refused to say the same about the ecclesiastical settlement.³⁶ Because large numbers of nonconformist ministers could not bind themselves to maintain the established order in Church and State, we are not justified in ascribing to them a dislike of monarchy. On the contrary, Colonel Blood, in 1663, thought it advisable to assure the Presbyterian clergy in Ulster that his party had no intention of setting up a republic.³⁷ The best-known Presbyterian writer of the day, Baxter, criticised Harrington and Vane and lived to regret it,³⁸ not because he had handled them too gently, but because his political opinions did not square with those of the Church party. Baxter taught that the people do not possess sovereign power, but he also refused to acknowledge the despotism of one man. He thought that democracy was "usually the worse" form of government, but also was of the opinion that Neros were more numerous than Solomons.³⁹ He wanted a limited, not an elective, monarchy. Sovereignty, he said, was vested in King, Lords and Commons, and when the King acts "*ultra vires*" Parliament can resist him. The abuse which was lavished on Baxter is easily explained. He never recanted, but always maintained that the Long Parliament had justice on its side when it took up arms against Charles I.⁴⁰

Baxter expressed the views of a majority of his co-religionists. The fact that in England and elsewhere they were a considerable minority opposed to the ecclesiastical order favoured by the monarch made them the opponents of regal despotism. Their rejection of the doctrine of passive obedience marked them out as supporters of Parliament against the Crown. When Shaftesbury was building up the Whig party he found his recruits, as Parker had prophesied,⁴¹ among the men whose fathers had followed Hampden to battle and Pym into the

³⁴ Reliq. Baxter, ii. 422-5 : iii. 4-9.

³⁵ Wm. Bates, "Life of Philip Henry," 76.

³⁶ R. Wild, "The Loyal Nonconformist," quoted Bate, "Declaration of Indulgence," 51.

³⁷ Adair, "True Narrative," 271.

³⁸ A Holy Commonwealth (1659). Reliq. Baxter, iii. 71-72.

³⁹ Holy Commonwealth, 63-8, 85, 202.

⁴⁰ Ibid. preface and pp. 86, 203-6, 230, 346, et seq. Reliq. Baxter, iii. 72.

⁴¹ Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity, 149-50.

division lobby. In so far as they can be described as a political party, the Presbyterians were the forerunners of the Whigs. As York wrote in 1667, they did not wish to abolish kingship but "to bring low the regal power."⁴² Their desire to limit Charles II's power in 1660 was never forgotten, and was one of the arguments used against their toleration by Danby in 1673.⁴³

One effect of the attempt to enforce strict uniformity was the bridging of the gulf which divided the Presbyterians and the Independents. In 1660 they were on the worst possible terms, because the policy of the former was not toleration for all but comprehension for themselves.⁴⁴ The royal declaration of October 25th, 1660,⁴⁵ foreshadowed a union between the Anglicans and Presbyterians, but was ominously silent as to the fate of the sects. Of the latter the most important numerically and socially were the Independents, the men who carried on the traditions of the five dissenting brethren of the Westminster Assembly. Strict Calvinists in theology, they differed from the Presbyterians on questions of Church discipline and organisation. This dissimilarity tends to disappear after 1660, as the persecutions forced the Presbyterians to organise themselves in congregations, and not in classes governed by synods.⁴⁶

In 1660 the term "Independent" did not possess a purely religious significance. The growth of Independency was connected in the popular mind with the execution of the King and the establishment of the Republic. The Independents had even discarded the Brownist principle and accepted preferment in the Cromwellian State Church. The political importance of the Independents during the Interregnum was the direct result of their strength in the army. Hence it is not surprising that their religious assemblies were regarded as strongholds of republican faith. But to describe all their members as republicans is an untenable position. Most, if not all, the Independent clergy in 1660 were born episcopalians.⁴⁷ In 1649 their political support was given to that party which opposed the employment of gaolers, magistrates and judges in the enforcement of ecclesiastical uniformity.

Only two Independent ministers, John Goodwin and Hugh Peters, openly supported the regicides. John Owen, who preached before the Rump the day after the execution, refrained

⁴² Clarke, i. 431.

⁴³ Grey, "Debates," ii. 47.

⁴⁴ Reliq. Baxter, ii. 379-80. Ralph, i. 52-3.

⁴⁵ Wilkins, "Concilia," iv. 560-4.

⁴⁶ There still remained minor differences. The authority of the Presbyterian clergy, for example, was greater than that of the Independent ministers (Burnet, iv. 161, Stoughton, "Hist. of Religion," iv. 166-7).

⁴⁷ Hanbury, "Historical Memorials," iii. 379.

from commenting on it.⁴⁸ Goodwin, the former Arminian Vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street,⁴⁹ was anathema to his Calvinist brethren. In January, 1649, he published a vindication of the policy of the army in purging the House of Commons⁵⁰ and after the execution of Charles I. came forward with *The Obstructors of Justice: or a Defence of the sentence passed on the late King.*⁵¹ But even Goodwin was a republican only because circumstances made him one. He defended the regicides, not because he had a predilection for commonwealth institutions, but because the restoration of the King would mean a return to religious tyranny.⁵²

Too much stress has been laid on the political aspects of Independency. Before the Restoration many congregations were purely religious bodies. In 1659 the Church at Yarmouth recorded "concerning civil business the Church, as a Church, desire not to meddle with."⁵³ After the return of the King the Independents were anxious to make clear the non-political character of their organisation. They recognised Charles II's claims,⁵⁴ and began to describe themselves as congregationalists, a term which possessed no political associations.⁵⁵

The most celebrated of their ministers taught the necessity of submission to the civil authority. John Howe opposed the officers who dissolved Richard Cromwell's Parliament.⁵⁶ In his best-known sermon, "*The Living Temple*," Howe uses language which sounds odd on the lips of a pastor whose people were noted for their democratic principles and the low estimate they placed on the hereditary rank. He thought it ridiculous that peasants and labourers "should take it upon them to judge to the rights of their prince and make an estimate of the measures of offences committed against the majesty and dignity of government."⁵⁷ The reputed head of the Independents, John Owen, maintained that his followers were loyal to Charles II, and disavowed every one of the political principles Parker had attributed to them in the "*Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity.*"⁵⁸ He was almost a Tory in his views. The compact theory has no place in his philosophy. On the contrary, men are born

⁴⁸ A Discourse about Toleration. Jan. 31, 1648/9.

⁴⁹ Wilson, "Dissenting Churches," ii. 406.

⁵⁰ Right and Might Well Met. Jan. 2, 1648/9.

⁵¹ (May 30) 1649.

⁵² Jackson, "Life of Goodwin," 201-2.

⁵³ Stoughton, "Hist. of Religion," iii. 28.

⁵⁴ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1660/1. 4. 442.

⁵⁵ In the applications for licences in 1672 the older word is rarely used (Lyon Turner, i. *passim*).

⁵⁶ Rogers, "Life of Howe," 120-24.

⁵⁷ Works, iii. 356-7.

⁵⁸ Works, xii. 455-6.

citizens and are not at liberty to dissent from the community. Subject have no right to rebel, even against a tyrant, save when he commands them to be guilty of the sins of idolatry and superstition.⁵⁹

When such as Owen and Howe dared not at times appear in the streets,⁶⁰ the lives of the less cautious must have been well nigh unbearable. Persecution naturally led to a loss of social influence. Although members of the Common Council of London sat in George Cockayne's congregation,⁶¹ the Independents never regained the influence they had possessed when men in high places had worshipped in their churches. It must not be supposed that the views of Howe and Owen were universally accepted among them. That many of the clergy were unjustly persecuted does not admit of doubt, but in the pews the democratic spirit was strong. The organisation of the Independent Churches was founded upon principles which made clergy and laity, peer and peasant, equal in the sight of God. Each Church was self-governing and democratic in character. It was the successful working of the democratic principle in religious matters that inspired the movement towards political democracy during the Civil War. The influence of their religious associations had made itself felt in the political conduct of many Independents in the past and possibly would do so again. It is significant that when Algernon Sidney was seeking allies, at the time of the Popish Plot, to assist in establishing a republic, he looked for them, not among the more aristocratic Presbyterians, but in the Independent Churches.⁶²

Leaving the Independents for the moment suffering under the imputation of being actual or potential rebels, we come to a third group of dissenters, whose real character has been obscured by the abuse heaped on them by both Anglicans and Nonconformists. The Anabaptists have been described as "the pariahs of history."⁶³ The movement in the sixteenth century was condemned both at Rome and Wittenberg. Catholic priest and Protestant ruler alike regarded it as a menace to social order and religious truth, and communicated their prejudices to posterity. After the collapse of the Munster experiment the Anabaptists were hunted throughout Christendom like wild beasts.⁶⁴ The real character of the movement is difficult to

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 490-6, 531-2.

⁶⁰ Life of Howe, 225.

⁶¹ Wilson, "Dissenting Churches," iii. 280-81.

⁶² Dalrymple, i. 357.

⁶³ R. Heath, "The Anabaptists and their English Descendants." *Contemporary Review*, Lix. 389.

⁶⁴ Underhill, "A Martyrology of the Churches of Christ commonly called Baptist."

determine. It was neither wholly religious nor wholly social and political. The poor who revolted against economic disabilities, religious enthusiasts living on the borders of an unseen world awaiting the kingdom of Christ, passive resisters and militant firebrands were all denominated Anabaptists. The attempt at Munster to apply the teaching of the New Testament, viewed through the eyes of the ruling classes, meant communism—a euphemism for the spoiling of the rich—the polygamy of Jan of Leyden and the horrors of class war.⁶⁵

The first appearance of the Anabaptists in the State Papers is in 1533,⁶⁶ but the movement had died out by the reign of Elizabeth. They reappeared just before the outbreak of the Civil War, not as part of a continental upheaval but as an offshoot of Independency. Puritans engaged in settling a "godly ministry" saw in these English Baptists the successors of Jan of Leyden. Histories of the Munster tragedy began to circulate in London.⁶⁷ After reading their Confession, published in 1646, Baillie wrote that thousands of them would not own it, as their beliefs agreed with those of the German Anabaptists.⁶⁸ Dr. Featley concluded that of all heretics the Anabaptists ought to be the most carefully watched.⁶⁹ Evidence that some of the Baptists of Stuart times were influenced by the earlier movement is found in the writings of Bunyan. The Anabaptist tradition must have lingered in the eastern countries which had provided a refuge for many fugitives from the continent. This tradition was the treasury on which Bunyan drew in writing *Pilgrim's Progress* and the account of the fall of "Mansoul."⁷⁰

In the seventeenth century the word Anabaptist was loosely used as a term of reproach and applied to all suspected of holding extreme opinions. The bogey of communism and the belief that the attack on the prelates was a preliminary to the ruin of the wealthy, explains the savage severity with which they were treated. In March 1660 the General Baptist Assembly issued "*A Brief Confession of Faith*," article 19 of which lays down that the Church ought to provide for the poor by voluntary gifts. This was their answer to those who accused them of

⁶⁵ Bax, "Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists"; Lindsay, "Hist. of the Reformation," ii. Hastings, "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics." Article on Anabaptists.

⁶⁶ Gardiner, "Letters and Papers of Henry viii." Vol. vi. 184.

⁶⁷ A Short Hist. of the Anabaptists of High and Low Germany (1642). A Warning for England (1642). Harl. Misc. vii. 382-90.

⁶⁸ Anabaptisme, the true Fountaine of Independency (1647).

⁶⁹ The Dippers Dipt (1645).

⁷⁰ Heath, "The Archetype of the *Pilgrim's Progress*," and "The Archetype of the *Holy War*." Contemporary Review Lxxx. 541-58. Lxxii. 105-18.

being communists.⁷¹ As a matter of fact, the only people to practise communism of property were the "Diggers." Even they only claimed the right to take unimproved lands.⁷²

Those who with Dr. Nalson dismissed the Anabaptists with the phrase, "let Munster eternally complain of them,"⁷³ found confirmation of their dislike in the excesses of the Fifth Monarchy Men. A few Baptist and other Nonconformist preachers such as Vavasour Powell, John Canne, Feake, Simpson and Rogers were actively associated with this sect. "Old Dagon" and "Man of Sin" were a type of the epithets they used to describe Cromwell, the great "Anti-Christ."⁷⁴ But the Fifth Monarchy Men are not as black as they have been painted. The doctrine of the millennium is older than the prophet Daniel. It was held by the Fathers of the Church and still persists. Calamy describes his old schoolmaster as a strict dissenter and "a sort of Fifth Monarchy Man" who could never be prevailed upon to take the oath of allegiance. Yet a more harmless and inoffensive person Calamy had not met with.⁷⁵ The sentiments of these men only became dangerous when the "saints" took upon themselves to hasten the coming of the divine kingdom. But such outbreaks as that of Venner were the work of a few madmen. The majority were content to wait patiently the fulfilment of God's promises. A pamphlet published by William Erbery in 1653 reminded the militants that they ought to be subject to the powers that be. The Fifth Monarchy Men and the Republicans had little in common. The first was a religious movement deriving its inspiration wholly from the Bible; the second a secular one, whose origin can be traced to a study of the classics rather than to a literal interpretation of Biblical prophecies. "Is Monarchy in a king any more against the reign of Christ than aristocracy in a parliament?" Erbery asks. "Is not the State of Holland and the Commonwealth of Venice as much for anti-Christ as the King of France or of Spain?"⁷⁶

The Baptists dissociated themselves from the political heresies of the Levellers, Republicans and Fifth Monarchy Men as completely as they denied connection with the economic fallacies of the "Diggers." After the publication of the second

⁷¹ Underhill, "Confessions of Faith," 118-19. Cf. that of 1647 where they say "the diligent and the slothful ought not to have equal positions" (*ibid.*, 280-84).

⁷² Behrens, "The Digger Movement."

⁷³ Common Interest of King and People (1677) 234.

⁷⁴ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1653/4 304-8.

⁷⁵ Life, i. 76.

⁷⁶ An Olive Leaf: or some peaceable considerations, etc. from Mr. Rogers, Mr. Powel and the rest of the good people of Christ Church. Jan. 9, 1653. Ivimey, "Hist. of the Baptists," i. 257.

part of *England's New Chains Discovered*,⁷⁷ Kiffin presented an address from the London Baptists complaining that it was read in their churches without their consent.⁷⁸ In a series of Confessions of Faith published between 1644 and 1689 they declared their aversion to interfering in secular affairs. They were the first who clearly understood the modern doctrine of toleration. The magistrate, they said, ought not to interfere in the government of that kingdom which is not of this world, and subjects ought not to rebel against the prince. Only when liberty of conscience is denied ought the "saints" to refuse obedience, and then only in that particular.⁷⁹

The same conclusions were reached by Thomas Grantham in 1678.⁸⁰ The State in Grantham's eyes was an organization existing for a temporal purpose, which had no mandate to coerce the consciences of its members. He complains that Baptist Churches had been unjustly treated by those who dissolved them as seminaries of rebellion and quoted from *Saints No Smelters*,⁸¹ in which the Baptist pastor, John Tombes, argues from the New Testament that both Christ and St. Paul commanded their followers to submit to the civil authorities. "Even if some foolish men in the same form of profession with us should break due bounds," Grantham writes, "yet this ought not to prejudice our Churches in general, who oppose such exorbitances as much as any." These "foolish men" were the militant Fifth Monarchy Men. Grantham held millenary views as did most members of his Church, but he advised the impatient "to study to be quiet and do their own business."⁸²

Political designs were attributed to the Baptists as a result of the activities of the Fifth Monarchy Men and the Republicans.⁸³ Cromwell dismissed many from the army,⁸⁴ but he protected Baptist congregations and allowed their ministers to hold Church livings. It was not until after the Restoration that peaceable citizens like Kiffin and Knollys were molested, than who no men could be less like conspirators. The Baptists

⁷⁷ By John Lillburne. March 24, 1648/9.

⁷⁸ Underhill, "Confessions of Faith," 288-92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid., passim.* The 1689 Confession of Faith is only a reprint of that of 1677. The Baptist Historical Society has just reprinted the "Mistery of Iniquity" of the Baptist leader, Thomas Helwys (1612), the first plea in English not merely for toleration but for absolute religious liberty.

⁸⁰ *Christianismus Primitivus*.

⁸¹ Published in 1664.

⁸² *Christianismus Primitivus* iii, 1-5, 12-13, 48-50, etc.

⁸³ L. F. Brown, "The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men." Champlin Burrage, "The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections." E. H. R. xxv. 722.

⁸⁴ Crosby, "Hist. of the Baptists," iii. 231-42.

sent addresses of loyalty to Charles II, but the persecutions began as soon as the Anglican clergy were in the saddle.⁸⁵

Venner's rising increased the suspicions with which they were regarded, and although with other Nonconformist Churches⁸⁶ they publicly disowned it, they were handled as though they had appeared in arms. Their meetings were restricted and their leaders imprisoned.⁸⁷ One writer drew a parallel between the Baptists, the Lollards and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, concluding that unless the movement was suppressed the nation would be ruined.⁸⁸

Plots and rumours of plots always had unhappy consequences for the Baptists. When news of the Yorkshire plot reached London several clergymen petitioned in favour of severer laws against Anabaptists "who desire to throw off the yoke of all government."⁸⁹ Nothing was too extravagant to be believed of them. Samuel Parker, the chaplain of the Primate, even licensed a book, *Mr. Baxter Baptised in Blood*, which described how the skin of the unfortunate Baxter was "most cruelly flead off from his body" by New England Baptists. We do not need Marvell's assurance that "there never was a compleater falsehood invented."⁹⁰ But there was some foundation for the fears which the Baptists inspired. Although allowance must be made for the use of the word, Anabaptist, to denote all classes of extremists, many of those who intrigued against Charles II's government belonged to the sect. Colonel Henry Danvers and Francis Smith, the "fanatic" bookseller, were both Baptist preachers.

As a rule, the Baptists were men of lower social status than the Presbyterians and Independents. In the episcopal returns of 1665, 1669 and 1676 they are generally described as "mean, inconsiderable fellows." Hence it is not surprising that popular fancy should attribute to them dangerous social doctrines. Some of their ministers, notably Tombes and Knollys, were men of ripe

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 19-26.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 42-9, 66-83. Neal, "Hist. of the Puritans" (1833) iii. 73-4. Underhill, 343-60. The Humble Petition of Several Societies called Anabaptists (Jan. 30) 1660/1. The Humble Apology of some . . . called Anabaptists (Jan. 28) 1660/1. Second Humble Address of . . . Anabaptists in Lincoln (Feb. 6) 1660/1. A Renunciation and Declaration of the Ministers of the Congregational Churches, Jan. 1660/1. A Judgement and Condemnation of Fifth Monarchy Men, Jan. 17, 1660/1.

⁸⁷ Wilkins, "Concilia," iv. 564-5. Crosby, ii. 91-2. Life and Death of Hanserd Knollys, 35-6.

⁸⁸ Semper Idem (1661). Harl. Misc. vii. 398-407.

⁸⁹ Wilkins, "Concilia," iv. 580. For the Yorkshire Plot (1663) see my article in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's *Journal*, xxxi., 348-59 1934.

⁹⁰ Marvell, "Works," iii. 309-10.

scholarship and occasionally we meet with a wealthy merchant like Kiffin among them.⁹¹ A large number of Cromwell's soldiers and junior officers were Baptists, but only a few of the higher officers, for example, Harrison and Overton, Robert Lilburne and Packer. The red-coats returned to civil life and attended conventicles, thereby supplying some justification for the idea that conventicles were military units. The episcopal returns of 1669 specially noted the presence of ex-soldiers at Nonconformist meeting-places. In Berkshire Colonel Rich held a conventicle at his house at Cookham. In Normanton Major Prinne assembled forty of his former command for religious purposes.⁹²

The fear that "the number of those that were to be suppressed did very much exceed . . . those that were to suppress,"⁹³ occasioned a census which proved the Nonconformists to be a small minority. Evidence on this point can be gleaned from the returns to Sheldon's circular in 1669, from the Indulgence documents of 1672 and to a lesser extent from the returns of 1665 and 1676.⁹⁴ The episcopal returns indicate that the dissenters did not exceed a quarter of a million, or about one twenty-fifth of the population,⁹⁵ a number which Dr. Sherlock admitted to be "too small to hurt the constitution."⁹⁶

The Baptists were considerably weaker than either the Presbyterians or the Independents. In Wiltshire they obtained one-third and in Somerset one-fourth of the licences granted in 1672. In Devon they secured three out of a total of 105. Although in Kent one-half of the licensed conventicles were Baptist, the numerical superiority of the congregational groups elsewhere was overwhelming.⁹⁷ If disaffection is to be wholly attributed to the Dissenters, the more wealthy and numerous Presbyterians must bear the greater part of the blame. A fourth group of Dissenters, the Quakers, need not detain us longer than

⁹¹ In Liverpool the Bishop describes an Anabaptist conventicle as composed mainly of rich people (Bate, App. iv.)

⁹² Lyon Turner, i. 50-1, 112 and *passim*.

⁹³ Leeds, MSS. 14.

⁹⁴ Lyon Turner, *passim*.

⁹⁵ Barlow, "Genuine Remains," 312-5. Some Remarks upon Government 1689 (S. Tracts (1705) i. 150). Both of these estimates are based upon the returns of 1676, which only dealt with the Province of Canterbury. Cf. Lyon Turner, iii. 114, 142, and Parker, "Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity," pp. xxxix.-xl., who obtain a similar result from those of 1669. But the Bishops' returns must be used cautiously. They are only reliable for districts in which the penal laws were not enforced. Dartmouth is said to have no dissenters in 1669, but in 1672, 164 members of a licensed congregation sent an address of thanks to the King. The same is said of Oxford City. Lyon Turner, i. 42-6, 207-8, iii. 827.

⁹⁶ A Vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts (1718) 53.

⁹⁷ Lyon Turner, i. and iii. *passim*. Bate, App. vii.

to note that though much misunderstood and persecuted by Anglicans and Dissenters, they had no share in the plots which troubled the last two Stuart kings.

An examination of the geographical distribution of the Dissenters yields interesting results. Those districts which supported the Long Parliament and consistently returned Whig members, were strongholds of the Nonconformist faith. Somerset, according to the returns of 1669, contained more Nonconformists, more dissenting ministers and more conventicles than any other county not excluding London.⁹⁸ After 1681 Shaftesbury looked to Somerset for armed support. Its peasantry rallied round Monmouth, who, like William III, preferred to land near the western woollen towns rather than on the east coast. Next to the western counties the Nonconformists were most strongly entrenched in London and the south-east, the district into which Protestant refugees from the Continent had immigrated during the reign of Elizabeth.⁹⁹ In East Anglia, the home of Cromwell's "Ironsides," Independency had flourished since the days of the Brownists. The Independent Church at Yarmouth boasted one regicide, Miles Corbet.¹⁰⁰ Richard Bower's letters to Williamson show how strong Independency was in Yarmouth after 1660, and here again we find the same phenomenon, a disposition to favour Puritan and Whig governments.¹⁰¹

The Dissenters were most numerous in the towns. In the counties where Nonconformity had taken deep root, the big towns were remarkable for their consistent opposition to the Court. London elected four Presbyterians to the Long Parliament of Charles II. Taunton and Tiverton were Whig strongholds. Under the command of Blake, Taunton successfully defied Charles I. In 1662 the walls were razed,¹⁰² but, nothing daunted, for years after the Restoration the inhabitants celebrated as a public holiday the anniversary of the relief of their city.¹⁰³ "Were this town brought to obedience," wrote an informer in 1682, "all the West would be then very regular, for it is the nursery of rebellion in these parts."¹⁰⁴

It would be erroneous to attribute the hostility of the

⁹⁸ Lyon Turner, iii. 78, 114-8.

⁹⁹ Smiles, "The Huguenots in England," 88-115. Barlow, *Genuine Remains*, 312.

¹⁰⁰ Stoughton, "Congregationalism in Norfolk."

¹⁰¹ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1667/8, *passim*: 1671, 48: S. P. Dom. Car. II 418. No. 67.

¹⁰² Toulmin, "Hist. of Taunton," 429-30.

¹⁰³ Letters and Hist. Documents of Alfred Morrison. Bulstrode Papers (1897) i. 40, 43, S. P. Dom. Car. II 419. No. 21.

¹⁰⁴ S. P. Dom. Car. II 418, No. 118.

Dissenters solely to a desire to restore the Commonwealth. Inhuman treatment at the hands of enraged Cavaliers must have destroyed the genuine constitutional loyalty of many of them. Oppression, according to Solomon, "makes a wise man mad." As Sir Charles Wolseley wrote, it is "not the having several parties in religion . . . that is in itself dangerous, 'tis the persecuting of them that makes them so."¹⁰⁵ The son of William Jenkins, a Presbyterian minister who died in Newgate, fought for Monmouth to avenge his father's death.¹⁰⁶ The persecutions which followed the Rye House plot explain the enthusiasm with which Monmouth was greeted. The Independents at Axminster took up arms primarily to defend liberty of conscience.¹⁰⁷ Many of them were so far from being Republicans as to believe that the Duke was the lawful king.¹⁰⁸ Joined to the legacy of hatred which intolerance left behind it was the suspicion that the royal family desired to restore Roman Catholicism and regal despotism. These latter considerations had more weight with the Nonconformists than the sufferings they experienced at the hands of the Anglicans. Hence they refused a toleration which was extended to Catholics and rested on a doubtful legal foundation.¹⁰⁹

The belief that the Dissenters had been unjustly condemned, alarm at the ruinous effects of the penal laws on trade¹¹⁰ and humanitarian sentiment¹¹¹ assisted the growth of a party in favour of religious toleration. Those who supported this idea divided the Dissenters into two groups, the tolerable and the intolerable. In the first class Baxter includes the Presbyterians and most of the Independents, that is those who accepted the Scriptures as the standard of faith. Those who looked for revelation "from within" he labelled "proper fanatics."¹¹² Most people agreed that "fanatics" ought not to be tolerated but differed in defining them. Shaftesbury would have tolerated all but the Fifth Monarchy Men.¹¹³ The anonymous author of *The Present State of the Nonconformists*¹¹⁴ advised the King

¹⁰⁵ Liberty of Conscience the Magistrates Interest (1668), 3.

¹⁰⁶ Turner, "Hist. of Remarkable Providences" (1697), i. Ch. 143, pp. 117-8.

¹⁰⁷ Stoughton, "Hist. of Religion," iv. 91-2.

¹⁰⁸ Pierce, "Vindication of the Dissenters" (1717), i. 261. Turner, "Hist. of Remarkable Providences," i. Ch. 143, p. 137.

¹⁰⁹ Reliq. Baxter, ii. 429-30, 433. Reresby 396.

¹¹⁰ Petty, "Britannia Languens" (1680), 104-10. Wolseley, "Liberty of Conscience," 9-10. Grey, "Debates," i. 114. Christie, "Shaftesbury," ii. App. i.

¹¹¹ Pepys, Aug. 4, 1664. Cal. S. P. Dom, 1670, 240.

¹¹² Reliq. Baxter, ii. 387.

¹¹³ Christie, ii. App. i. pp. vii.-viii.

¹¹⁴ Transcripts of State Papers, Stowe, MS. f. 16 (1672). Another copy is wrongly dated 1660 in the catalogue. *Ibid.* 185, f. 171.

in 1672 to adhere to the Declaration of Indulgence, but added that it would be "great providence to provide against the worst." He described the Presbyterians as friendly to monarchy, recommended that "a careful eye" be kept on the Independents, but doubted the possibility of gaining the goodwill of those "zealous commonwealthsmen," the Anabaptists. Unfortunately for the Dissenters, their toleration was never debated on its merits. The issue in 1672 was not, is it safe to permit Nonconformity, but has the King exceeded his powers? The Whigs preferred later to stake their all upon the exclusion of York, and lost the opportunity to obtain relief for their Nonconformist allies.

The Commonwealth party was not recruited solely from the conventicles. The names of a few dissenting ministers appear in lists of conspirators, but the Fergusons, Hobsons and Richardsons found little support among their ejected brethren. On the contrary, there is evidence that the republicans were opposed by the leaders of Nonconformity. The Presbyterians "thought it a deliverance to be rescued out of their hands."¹¹⁵ The attitude of the Republicans to the clergy was ill calculated to win their support. Baxter was moved to write the *Holy Commonwealth* by the anti-clericalism of the author of *Oceana*. Such a government, he thought, "Would not secure us the Christian religion."¹¹⁶ Many of the regicides were not Puritans. Marten and Scot were notorious libertines. John Howe, speaking of the Republican officers, wrote, "I know some leading men are not 'Christians'."¹¹⁷ This rift between Puritanism and Republicanism was as noticeable after the Restoration. Many Republicans were free-thinkers and began to "profess deism."¹¹⁸ The Commonwealth leaders in the reign of Charles II, Essex, Wildman, Sidney and Neville, the City agitators, West, Wade, Ayloffe, Rumsey and the two Goodenoughs, to name only six, were not members of any religious organisation. Some of those who plotted armed resistance after 1681 were censured by the Dissenters for their moral frailties. The vices of Howard and Grey were the theme of popular gossip. Monmouth was an adulterer, and Armstrong, his intimate friend, a murderer and a well-known figure in London's haunts of vice.

The primary interests of the Dissenters were not political but religious. They had supported the Interregnum governments and would have been equally loyal to that of Charles II if liberty of conscience had been allowed. That the Bible was the revealed Word of God was the fundamental article of their faith. The

¹¹⁵ Burnet (ed. Airy), i. 120.

¹¹⁶ *Holy Commonwealth*, 225. Reliq. Baxter, iii. 71.

¹¹⁷ Rogers, "Life of Howe," 94-5.

¹¹⁸ Burnet (ed. Airy), ii. 352.

intellectual ancestors of the Republicans must be sought in Greece and Rome. They quoted the Bible to demonstrate the futility of building political systems upon any other foundation but that of natural reason. To them it was a history of the Jews, and for political purposes, only of equal value with that of any other nation. Their faith in the superior value of Republican institutions was defended by arguments of a political rather than a theological nature. A strong monarchy was believed to threaten the safety of private property and personal liberty. It is these economic and political considerations that lie at the root of Whig and Republican opposition to the second Stuart despotism.

The "mean, inconsiderable fellows" who attended conventicles were not the men to whom such arguments were likely to appeal. They did not submit to a thousand and one annoyances because they were convinced that landed property was sacred. It was the gentry who saw in the political philosophy of Locke and Sidney a faith worth fighting for. The leading county families were the most formidable foes the Stuarts had to face. They aimed at and ultimately succeeded in reducing the authority of the Crown and increasing that of the aristocracy. The politics of the squires who filled the benches at Quarter Sessions were those of the neighbouring great landowners. Sir Edward Seymour's influence in Devon was so great that it was mockingly called his "western empire," and its members were styled by himself his "West Saxons."¹¹⁹ In a thoroughly agricultural county like Cheshire the politics of the people were settled by their landlord. Here Delamere was the leader of the gentry who entertained Monmouth in 1682 and whose son disappointed the Duke's expectations in 1685. Three years later Delamere in Cheshire and Danby in Yorkshire won a bloodless victory over the Stuarts. Buckingham, the county of Hampden and his less worthy grandson, found a constituency, Amersham, for Algernon Sidney, produced regicides from among its landed gentry and Presbyterians as eminent as Lord Wharton.

Just as the religion of the towns coloured the political sympathies of the inhabitants, so the influence of great nobles decided those of rural England. The importance of the Dissenters in the struggle against the Stuarts lay in the fact that the suspicion that Charles and his brother were plotting the overthrow of Protestantism and the destruction of the national liberties, alienated the Dissenters from the Crown. Hence their discontent was always at hand to assist the political innovator.

J. WALKER.

¹¹⁹ Marvell, "Works," iv. 337. Ailesbury Memoirs, i. 360. Portland MSS. H.M.C. Rep. xv. pt. iv. 177.