'Religion's safe, with priestcraft is the war': Augustan anticlericalism and the legacy of the English Revolution, 1660-1720.

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I

Describing the widespread attacks upon belief in heaven and hell, Francis Osborne, in his *Advice to a son* (1656), underscored the political consequences of such theological heterodoxy: there would be 'no less diminution to the reverence of the civil magistrate than the profit of the priesthood'.[1] This theme of the implicit relationships between religion and politics, and of ideas and power will be the premise of this discussion. In recent years the historiography of the English revolution and its consequences has suffered some considerable neglect: revisionists and counter-revisionists, inverting the whiggish prolepticism of the Marxist and liberal historians, have focused in ever more refinement on the narratives of high politics or the structural defects of Stuart monarchy. Unseen causality rather than determined consequence has been the motor of historical interpretation. A number of historians, by taking a wider view, have attempted to redress this by claiming in (different ways) the continuity of seventeenth century political and religious structures.

Historiographies of the Restoration, of the 'attempted Whig revolution' of 1678-83, and of the Glorious Revolution of 1689 have implicitly constructed accounts of the 'consequences' of the 1640s and 1650s. Mending the broken back of the seventeenth century, Finlayson has emphasised the religious factor in English politics before and after the interregnum: if there were 'puritans' before 1660 there were 'puritans' afterwards too. Scott, building upon similar foundations, has asserted a continuity of crisis throughout the seventeenth century driven by anxieties and conflicts over 'popery and arbitrary government'.[2] Taking the longer view historians like J.C.D. Clark, in asserting the persistence of *ancien regime* structures of politics, religion and society into the nineteenth century explicitly challenged the significance of the English revolution beyond providing a powerful memory of inversion and disorder.[3] Other forms of historical enquiry, exploring structural, cultural and intellectual narratives (state building,[4] print culture,[5] political theory,[6] gender relations,[7] theories of toleration[8]) tending to address broader periods of historical time do not devote specific attention to the question of the impact of the revolution.

In attempting to address the issue of the legacy or consequences of the 1640s and 1650s the quality and nature of answer will be determined by the understanding of the 'nature of the English Revolution'. The vocabulary of 'legacy', 'consequences', 'inheritance', invokes a number of conceptual problems: questions of socio-economic causality, political intentionality, and structural determinism (amongst many) are all begged. This paper will rest upon the foundations of a particular view of the 'Revolution': whether one subscribes to the celebratory accounts of Hill, Manning or Smith, or the more revisionist views of a Morrill, Kishlansky or Davis, it is undeniable that the 1640s and 1650s experienced a crisis of order.[9] Killing the King and Archbishop fractured the commonplace assumptions of hierarchy and degree: the execution of Charles and Laud became powerful icons of blasphemous sedition. In the provinces, in the parishes, in the yards and alleys of towns and villages, in the churches and meeting houses, in the fields and pulpits there was resistance, dissidence and disorder. With the major fracture of monarchy and episcopacy came

the minute fissures of discipline and order. Although the extent and diversity of this experience of disorder is still the subject of enormous debate, it is possible to claim with some confidence that the 'naturalisation of power' had been compromised.[10] The conventional assumptions about the social and political loci of authority, and the concomitant procedures of discipline and order, were subverted. The consecrated routines of compliance to the various forms of social, political and religious authority were disputed, ignored and ruptured. Regardless of the dimensions and frequency of these acts of insubordination, it is clear that one of the greatest legacies of the Revolution involved the attempted re-invention, and re-imposition of such normal routines of compliance. After 1660 the cultural and political instruments for reconstructing order were continually contested. The most difficult and complex procedure for re-establishing and 'naturalising' power involved bringing conscience back into deference to authority: this can be most imaginatively conceptualised in the form of the relationship between Church and State, and that between priest and people. During the Revolution, the status of the Church and the priesthood, one of the most powerful icons and actors of natural order, was fundamentally challenged by a variety of anticlerical platforms.

Anticlericalism, or the expression of hostility towards individual clergy or the Church as an institution, was about more than straightforward religious taste. In exploring the history of anticlericalism, (whether articulated in a popular, intellectual or political form), *au fond*, the matter at issue involved a fundamental understanding of the way early modern conceptions of authority and power were structured by religious belief.[11] It is still an overwhelming characteristic of historians working upon the crises that shattered seventeenth century England to be more concerned with constitutional liberties, the rise of the secular state, or the mechanics of political patronage, than with the difficult and complex relationship between religion and power. Thus 'anticlericalism' has been marginalised as a subject fundamental to the study of the problems of the early modern state.[12] Even historians of ideas seem to be more interested in secular or civil conceptions of Law, property and rights theories, than understandings of conscience and conviction.[13] Here, of course, the irony is that most of the languages of modern political discourse was born in the confessional struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[14] Given that early modern understandings of the confessional nature of the state insisted that religious orthodoxy was the premise of civil citizenship, and that consequently politics was infused with Christian meaning, then struggles over the power, significance and nature of religious institutions were not marginal to political conflict, but in most cases constitutive of it.

As a consequence of the ruptures in the mid-century, anticlericalism, became in the second half of the seventeenth century, more than the ridiculing of churchmen upon the stage or in the alehouse. At one level it could be seen as an act of popular protest, resisting and subverting elite status, but it was both part of a theological critique of the status quo, and a constituent element of an articulate and radical political discourse that derived much of its vocabulary from the 1640s and 1650s. Peasants and philosophers might be anticlerical.[15] One of the important shifts in public discourse from the 1630s to the 1700s was the displacement of the attack upon the Church from purely theological premises, to a more systematic (but no less religious) political language. In the 1630s the idiom of puritan anticlericalism was expressed in the languages of prelacy and the rhetorics of Martin Marprelate, by the 1640s and 1650s millennial expectation blended with political analysis and resulted in a fierce indictment of 'priestery'. By the 1700s it is possible to identify a cognate discourse that took 'priestcraft' as its linguistic premise: the fact that the word was coined in the 1650s and became the by-word of anticlericalism in the 1690s and 1700s is significant in itself.[16]

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In order to examine the continuities of discourse it is worth, for a moment, attempting an overview of the way early modern historiography has employed the notion of anticlericalism.[17] There are really three broad historiographical contexts where 'anticlericalism' as an analytical tool is employed with any rigour: studies of the 'reformations' (1530s, 1540s),[18] accounts of the English Revolution (1640s, 1650s),[19] and explorations of the religious dimensions of the various national Enlightenments.[20] For many of the historians of the reformation in England: anticlericalism is a rather overstated, and ultimately marginal, factor compared with the powerful personalities and programmes of central government. Again with the exception of a handful of historians, very little attention has been focused upon the attack upon the Church of England from the 1630s as a political matter. The irony of this is of course that 'No bishop, no king' was one of the key political aphorisms of the seventeenth century: a phrase that indicates the interdependence between political and ecclesiastical matters in the period. Given that the hinterland of political and religious beliefs were determined by theological beliefs the idea that both the monarchy and the church ruled by divine appointment was entrenched in political discourse. Just as monarchy was sacred and unchallengeable, so was the church and all its men: as clergymen and courtiers were swift and clamouring to point out, any attack upon the Church by implication struck at the authority of the King. It was in the 1630s, under the regime of Charles I and Archbishop Laud, that the mutually supportive interests of Church and Monarchy became a badge of ideological correctness. Archbishop Laud, condemning the puritan voices of Bastwick, Burton and Prynne in Star Chamber, insisted that in attacking episcopacy they struck at monarchy itself. When the hostilities of the first Civil War fractured the established hierarchies of British society the first casualty was not Monarchy but the Church. Although some historians have indicated the English Revolution was not the first democratic revolution, but the last war of religion, the thrust of historiography is still focused upon the constitutional issue of the attack upon monarchical authority rather than upon the wider crisis of religious authority.[21]

II

One of the most profound and immediate consequences of the revolutionary years of the 1640s and 1650s was that the status of the priesthood and the institutional power of the established church became the object of significant political and religious contestation. As a starting point for considering the meaning of this contestation it is worth engaging with the question of what was it to be a priest? After 1642 the submerged debates about the diverse accounts of the functions, rights, duties, gifts, and offices that were associated with the cure became central to the national and parochial conceptions of churchmanship. Whether the origins of such faculties were divine or conventional, apostolic or prophetic, indelible or institutional were conceptual issues that held enormously significant implications for the social power of those whom administered 'true religion'. While there have been studies of the Clergy as a profession,[22] of the economic problems of the Church,[23] and of the complex ecclesiological models adopted by different theological moments in the administration of the church in England[24] there has been little historical examination of the changing construction of 'priesthood' in the early modern period.[25] Inscribing descriptions of the rights, powers and privileges of the Church was clearly not simply a religious or spiritual matter as thinkers like Thomas Hobbes were very well aware: priests, clergymen, rectors, lecturers, curates, deans, bishops, preachers, chaplains, all attracted, wielded and performed different types of religious and social power. To define the 'Church' as the body of the congregation, or only those anointed by bishops, or baptised by ministers, or those saved, or whatever, was a matter of precise and dangerous practice. Defining priesthood was one of the key moments in the politics of subordination that structured early modern society. Challenging the dominant and

commonplace understandings of what priesthood and clerical authority was in turn posed a threat to the hierarchical structure of social and political power.[26]

Understandings of the nature of priesthood and the consequential definitions of ecclesiastical power was not resolved at the Restoration but became one of the centrally debated 'political' issues after 1660.[27] The defence of the sacerdotal understanding of the Church became an active and powerful political ideology after 1660. It was the subject of radical challenges both from within and without the religious establishment. That *de jure divino* conceptions of priesthood, and the implied subordinationist description of political and social hierarchy, was robust and muscular into the eighteenth century has become an established point in the historiography. This is not to suggest that it was unchallenged; in fact it might be possible to argue that one of the reasons why the Church persisted as powerful social institution into the nineteenth century was because of its ability to adapt and appropriate the criticisms of its enemies. In the handbooks of religious practice, political understandings intertwined with devotional ritual and prayer. One of the enduringly popular works of this genre was Robert Nelson's *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England* first published in 1704, by 1800 it had achieved some twenty-eight editions.[28] Nelson, a non-juring layman, published his work to defend the Church from the threat of impiety and atheism. If veneration for the Clergy could be 'early instilled into tender minds' it might be possible that the next generation could 'retrieve that respect to the sacred Order which we so scandalously want in this'.[29] Nelson detailed with precision the dignity and power of the 'Holy Orders'. Priesthood was an honourable employment with 'the same work in kind … with that of the Blessed Angels'. Clergymen were 'ministering spirits' bringing to mankind the benefits of baptism, the sacraments and absolution. The clergyman was commissioned by Christ to act for God in the 'administration of Holy things'. The very titles of dignity indicated their *sacerdos*: they were 'ministers of Christ, stewards of the Mysteries of God … Ambassadors for Christ in Christ's stead. Co-workers with him, Angels of the Churches'. Each priest was 'impowered and authorised to negotiate and transact for God'.[30]

Such a sacerdotal conception of the priesthood was the object of devout and hostile revulsion from the 1630s: it was clearly contentious even within the parameters of orthodoxy. While Article XIX (of the 39) had established the 'visible' Church of Christ, the ecclesiological dimensions and nature of such 'visibility' had varied greatly within Trinitarian Protestant discourses. In one form or another the Church was a mechanism for the 'incarnation' of divine justice: whether placing soteriological emphasis upon pulpit or sacrament, on baptism or absolution, the 'Church' entertained an *ordo*, if not *jurisdictio,* made by God. The visible 'Anglican' communion stressed order, obedience and subordination. The divine apostolicity of the institution enabled the soteriologically correct administration of the sacraments: *salus extra ecclesia non est*. The spiritual succession of Bishops, priests and deacons guaranteed the holiness of the two key sacraments of baptism and eucharist. This hierarchical and divine model of the Christian community also implied a politics of subordination in a civil context.[31] As Nelson put it succinctly 'that the good of the state is hereby more secured, in those instructions men receive from the Ministers of God, in the necessary Duties of Obedience, Justice and Fidelity'.[32]

Just as the ecclesiastical polity was the product of Christ's incarnation, so was the civil polity: priests, then, not only sanctified religion, but politics too. The dissidence about the nature of priesthood made in the interregnum compromised the smooth assumption of the connections between the two forms of order. As Hobbes understood acutely it was precisely because most people 'believed' in the divine authority of the Church that it was such a powerful political institution. As Hobbes pointed out (after the

Restoration) with some venom in *Behemoth,* it was the misdirection of unpleasing priests (of all hues) that prompted the anxieties that caused the turbulence of the revolution. Unpicking the 'authority' of the institution was a more radical and more incisive strategy than merely targeting the (corrupt) 'beliefs' that the Church instilled in the laity: thus in Chapter 42 of *Leviathan* Hobbes deconstructed the authenticity of any claim to an apostolic, visible Church of Christ. Hobbes' strategy laid the groundwork for a powerful and increasingly effective anticlerical discourse against 'priestcraft' that deafened churchmen in the 1690s and 1700s.

Since the Church was the vehicle of Incarnation in early modern society the clergy made sense of the world to the early modern laity: they interpreted the Bible, performed the ceremonies of worship, advanced precepts for living, and authorised the social hierarchy in sermons, catechisms and pastoral letters. [33] The authoritative position of the Church, and of individual clerics, was not however achieved with out contestation. Attacks on the moral probity and theological correctness of the Church and Churchmen were fundamental to the 'teeming freedom' of the Revolution. English men and women, perhaps newly literate in the injunctions of Scripture, wished, since it was their conscience and salvation which was at stake, to be convinced that the Church was Godly. This implied not just that individual priests were of unimpeachable moral standards, but also that the institutions of Church government were as prescribed (or at least at a minimum not proscribed) by God. Thus from the days of the 1530s there had been an increasingly diverse and intense debate about what precisely 'the Church' was. Scriptural words such as 'Ecclesia' might be translated to legitimate rule by Bishops, presbyters or laity. The English revolution saw a turning point in the developments of this form of scriptural hermeneutics: the politics of translation and the institutional implications of the understandings of the origins, nature and power of 'ecclesiastical' authority in the converging writings of Hobbes and Harrington in the early to mid-1650s provided a combined textual resource that became the foundation for a erastian attack upon clericalism in the 1690s and 1700s. The transformation in Hobbes and Harrington was to apply specifically historical and 'political' readings to the history of 'incarnation' as opposed to the more determinedly theological contestations of rival descriptions of true religion.[34]

III

That the attack upon the church was conceived as a politically subversive activity was one of the persisting legacies of the 1640s and 1650s. As a consequence defences of sacerdotal qualities and apostolic successions became both more stentorian and more imperilled after the 1660s.[35] One example of this continuity can be seen in the controversy sparked in 1698 by the non-juring cleric and historian, Jeremy Collier, who published an impassioned attack upon the immorality and profanity of the English stage: a text that launched an ongoing literary debate about the role of literature and the dramatic arts in Augustan culture for the following twenty years.[36] Although clearly concerned with the general social corruption caused by the English stage, much of Collier's hostility was directed against those plays and playwrights that satirised the established Church of England and its Churchmen. As he explained, 'the satyr of the stage upon the clergy is extremely particular. In other cases, they level at a single mark, and confine themselves to persons. But here their buffoonery takes an unusual compass: they shoot chained shot, and strike at universals'. The irreligious authors focused upon the institutional status of the church: 'They play upon the characters and endeavour to expose not only the Men, but the business'.[37] Without doubt, for Collier, the English stage was the worst in Europe for (as he continued) 'no where else 'entertains the Audience with Priests'.[38] Collier continued to substantiate his drama

criticism with extended and detailed hostile reviews of the representation of the clergy in a number of popular plays: *The Provoked Wife*, *The English Oedipus*, and *The Spanish Dealer* being some of the more scandalous examples. Churchmen were represented as fools, ignorant, lecherous and debauched. Priests of all religions and confessions were ridiculed: 'neither Jews nor heathens, Turks nor Christians, Rome nor Geneva, Church nor Conventicle, can escape them'.[39] Collier's point was that such representations undermined the 'function' of the Clergy; it corroded their public credibility and ultimately all true religion. He continued, 'to bring the Church into the Playhouse, is the way to bring the Playhouse into the Church. 'Tis apt to turn religion into Romance; and make unthinking people conclude that all serious matters are nothing but farce, fiction and design'.[40]

Respect for the clergy was constitutive of political and religious order: the Church demanded such homage because of its relationship with God, the sacred duties of its office, and its divine function. 'Government and Religion, no less than trade subsist upon reputation': on this point Collier was unbending, he continued 'to expose a Priest, much more to burlesque his function, is an affront to the deity. All indignities done to ambassadors, are interpreted upon their master, and reveng'd as such. To outrage the Ministers of Religion, is in effect to deny the Being, or Providence of God: and to treat the Bible like a Romance'.[41] Collier's polemic was not simple clerical self-interest, but as he asserted, crucial to the maintenance of a deontological understanding of society. Epitomising the commonplace confessional understanding of the relationship between politics and religion Collier insisted that, 'the function and Authorities of religion have a great influence on Society. The interest of this life lies very much in the belief of another. So that if our Hopes were bounded with sight and sense, if eternity was out of the case, general advantage, and publick reason, and secular policy, would oblige us to be just to the Priesthood'. Collier had no doubts that 'priests and religion always stand and fall together'. Religion was the basis of good government: since humanity was base, 'When conscience takes its leave, Good faith and Good nature goes with it. Atheism is all self, mean and mercenary'. Restating in powerful and simple language the standard tropes of the confessional state Collier insisted that because 'the Atheist has no hereafter, and therefore will be sure to make the most of this world. Interest, and pleasure, are the Gods he worships, and to these he'll sacrifice everything else'.[42] For Collier any threat to the cultural authority of Churchmen undercut the fundamental premises of political order. Priests spoke for God: 'they represent his Person, Publish his laws, Pass his Pardons, and preside in his Worship'.[43] As Collier insisted (echoing Nelson) the priest ought to be venerated: to maim priestly authority was to 'cramp his power'.[44] Although Collier was a man of sacerdotal conviction, refusing the (in his view) ungodly and immoral oaths to the Williamite regime, his understanding of the sanctity and *de jure divino* authority of the Church and the consequent wickedness of anticlericalism was shared by many of his contemporaries.

As one of Collier's first critics, the radical Whig John Dennis, pointed out an uncritical attitude towards the authority of the Church was a sign of Popish tyranny: if priests were hypocritical, debauched and stupid then it was the duty of the stage to expose them. On the continent because of the close alliance between 'priestcraft and secular policy' there was little evidence of anticlerical writing, but in England, Dennis continued, 'the religion is so pure, that to touch a priest is by no means to hurt the religion'.[45] By the 1690s Collier and Dennis represent two almost radically incommensurable positions: for Collier the untouchable nature of *sacerdos* was the *esse* of true religion. For Dennis on the other hand true religion existed without the necessary ministrations of a divine Church. For one writer defending the Church was the essence of religion,

for the other establishing a critique of priestcraft was the starting point of true virtue. The nature, authority and function of the Church and Churchmen was key to the political debates between the 1690s and 1720s: anticlericalism, rather than being a marginal theological deviance was a central ideological discourse. If we peel away the language of religion it is possible to see the debate between Collier and Dennis as a contestation for control of public authority, a battle over which public institution legitimately should define and determine the contents and form of communal moral discourse. Underpinning the continuing debates about the extent and nature of toleration, the practice of occasional conformity, and the debates about the Test and Corporation Acts, were rival conceptions of the nature of priesthood. The secure establishment of the Hanoverian succession provided the political context for the radical commonwealth ministry of Sunderland and Stanhope to attempt to fulfil an anticlerical programme. The suspension of Convocation in 1717, and the repeal of Schism and Occasional Conformity acts in 1719 were important, if now little remarked on achievements. The hostility to priestcraft generated in the press campaigns of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon between 1718 and 1721 have often been regarded as proleptic of Enlightenment irreligion: it would be more fruitful to think of their polemic as a re-articulation of discourses created in the 1640s and 1650s.

As men and women became more accustomed to reading the Bible in different ways, their consequent understandings of the nature and form of the 'true church' became ever more diverse and fragmented.[46] These diversities held implications for the authority of the Church: as the 1630s and 1640s indicate, theological dissent could spiral rapidly into social chaos. Whether, when and how, the Church and Churchmen were being corrupted by the agents of Antichrist, was the central and ultimately destructive question of political controversy. Before the monarchy was destroyed in 1649, the Church of England had been abolished as an effective Christian institution in the early 1640s.[47] If we took the time to examine the arguments of Levellers and Quakers, of Ranters and blasphemers it would become apparent that the Clergy were the focus of a profound assault. All the mischiefs of England, wrote William Hartley in 1649, 'may be properly interpreted to flow from the generality of the clergie, who through powerful influence, and subtill insinuation ... doe bend the people's hearts to the crooked bow of their self concernments'.[48] While much of the Interregnum anticlericalism had a sharp political edge to it, linking as Winstanley put it the 'most dreadful and terrible beast of the clergy power'[49] with the political tyranny of the 'kingly power' of the Stuart monarchy, the dynamic of this hostility was prompted by theologically entrenched understandings of divine providence and the apocalypse.

After the restoration of monarchical authority in 1660, the question of the power of clerical institutions remained at the heart of political conflict. If we examine the canonical writings of Thomas Hobbes, or John Locke with these matters at the forefront of our minds, rather than concerns about the growth of modernity, it is possible to understand why both these men paid so much attention to the nature and authority of the Church. Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) spent more time offering a critique of corrupt Churchmen than considering the origins of political science. John Locke, heralded as an apostle of modern liberty, was (as his correspondence with men like Furly shows) properly and immediately concerned with terminating the corrupting influence of devious and tyrannical churchmen. Although the millenarian impulse gave way to a more tactical engagement with the problems of a persecuting church, ecclesiological matters remained at the centre not margins of political debate.[50] The power of the Church and Churchmen to impose upon individual conscience was repeatedly and ultimately successfully challenged from the re-assertion of confessionalism in the 1660s to the suspension of Convocation in 1717: it is now no

longer possible to see the Restoration as an arena for the growth of party politics and the constitutional rebuttal of Stuart absolutism without engaging with the key matters of conscience and conformity.[51] Debates about the authority of the Church to impose upon conscience were not just theological, but by default also contestations about the nature of the limits and legality of state power: anticlericalism was not simply a religious position but part of a wider discourse about power and authority. If society was not god-given and priest-ruled, then what principle of shared legitimacy bound it together? Anticlerical arguments had to do more conceptual work than merely indict theocratic corruption. Anticlerical writings and actions would ultimately fracture (but not destroy) the consensual authority of the confessional state.[52]

By the 1700s anticlericalism had become the bedrock of a radical Whig and republican political discourse. In many ways there had been a shift, ultimately as a consequence of the revolution of the 1640s and 1650s, from a theological indictment of the Church to a more sociological analysis. Whereas Matthew Tyndale, the sixteenth century translator of the Bible, assaulted the Church because it was tainted with popery (a theological account), Matthew Tindal, republican and deist fellow of All Souls, Oxford, writing in the 1700s, reviled the 'priestcraft' of the churchmen who attempted to tyrannise over the consciences of the laity. Rather than debating about the different merits of one type of priest as against another, this post-confessional discourse suggested all clerics were corrupt: English Catholic or Protestant popery was as bad as any continental variety.[53] This shift, from theology to social analysis, and the consequential shattering of the uniform vision of men like Richard Hooker which asserted that 'Christian' and 'Citizen' would be identical categories, ultimately meant that the assumptions that underlay the authority of state and government could no longer be assumed to be shared. Without one shared religious vision, the purpose and functioning of political authority became fundamentally contested. It would be the task of political writers in the eighteenth century to attempt to construction an account of legitimate government without the helpful underpinnings of shared theological 'ends'.[54]

IV

That the relationship between anticlericalism and political crisis was still powerful and turbulent can be seen in the conflict prompted by the Sacheverell trial in 1710. On the night of March 1st 1710, the City of London, and especially the area of the west-end and Holborn, was convulsed with various rioting crowds. During the course of the evening's events dissenting meeting houses were attacked and destroyed, lords, earls and bishops were insulted and affronted in the streets, and many citizens were beaten, assaulted and even killed . Any who refused to join in with the chant of 'High Church and Sacheverell' were 'knocked down' by armed and increasingly violent men. For at least four hours the City was in rampage, unchecked by any of the commonplace agencies of civic order: ultimately the peace was restored by the intervention of mounted troops. The Horse Guards remained on patrol until the 3rd of March, while the militia and trained bands were deployed and armed against any further outbreaks of disorder until the end of the month.[55] Abigail Harley writing to Edward Harley in Oxford the day after the tumult, commented that 'now we hear nothing but drums'.[56] Interestingly, Abigail Harley cast doubts upon the role the authorities had taken during the turmoil 'I pray God it stop here. This is apparent, that had the least care been taken yesterday, when our ministry had notice of it, all this tumult had been prevented, but I believe that was not their desire'.[57]

While there has been some considerable debate about exactly how far the action of these days was autonomous or 'managed' by the political elites of Augustan London, there has been little discussion of the 'meaning' of the tumult. What is clear that the

battle fought out between the 'Church in Danger' and the defence of 'Revolution principles' was brutal and deliberate. The ironical element of the episode is to point out that the disorder was a manifestation of the politics of subordination: this much was manifest to contemporaries such as Abigail Harley who thought the 'insolence of the mob' an 'odd way of defending passive obedience and non-resistance'.[58] Henry Sacheverell had been brought to trial by the Whig regime for publicly articulating an overly subordiationist theory of authority against the 'revolution politicks' of 1688. Sacheverell's *de jure divino* defence of religious and political hierarchy refuted principles of natural liberty and contract theory in favour of the theological imperative of *Romans* 13: 'obey the powers that be', were by the dominant Whig ministry interpreted as rebellious and insubordinate. To make matters even more convoluted this moment in March 1710 was not simply enacted between political incendiary and political authority, but was also a powerful contestation about the 'correct' nature of priesthood and religion.

Much of the Whig case against Sacheverell insisted that, not only was his political theory deviant, but his performance as a churchman was unacceptable. If we make a parallel with the trial of Laud, it is simple to describe it as a confrontation between political power and religious authority: the difference is found in the relative 'powers' of either side. Sacheverell, as the testimonies of civil disorder establish, was able, though his public communication and actions, to mobilise massive popular support for his vision of authority. His status as a churchman and a priest, gave him a power that allowed him to challenge the statutory power of the state. An examination of the trial records of Sacheverell illustrates, the crime he was prosecuted for was as much for being a bad priest, as a political deviant. Throughout the lengthy pages of the various 'versions' of the trial it is clear that although the Whig managers thought of Westminster Hall as a venue for underscoring the limits and duties of good subjects (both civil and religious). Sacheverell too, saw the public trial as an opportunity to capture the speech of his opponents, to appropriate the language of truth, orthodoxy, religion and order to his own platform.[59]

That the supposed stabilities of post-revolutionary Britain could be plunged into chaos and disorder by the antics of a black-coated priest is testimony to the persisting problems of religious dissensus and the consequent political fissures of seventeenth century England. The 1640s and 1650s had exposed the various infrastructural components of what has become known as the 'confessional' state: in particular the powerful social and ideological connection between divine right political and religious order. Priests and churchmen were different from constables and cowherds. Public contestation in pamphlet literature, ecclesiastical courts or parliamentary elections was more than conflict between rival accounts of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, but ultimately engagements between compliance and resistance.[60] That the languages and discourses that established and communicated these contestations were forged in the crucible of revolutionary conflicts can be established in the inversions of the records of the trial of Sacheverell. In the standard published account of the conflict there is recorded an interesting moment where the accused clergyman attempted to justify his sermon against 'false brethren' by pointing out the reams of blasphemous, seditious and ungodly material that had inundated the world of print. He compounded this by reading from a series of scandalously profane contemporary works. As Sacheverell's legal brief explained, 'We shall beg leave to produce several books, wherein there are the strangest opinions that perhaps your Lordships ever heard of; and we shall first confine ourselves to them which relate to Blasphemy, Irreligion and Heresie, which we confess are not pleasant to be heard, or fit to be publish'd, if it were not absolutely necessary for the Doctor's defence'.[61] The first extract was from the miscellaneous

works of the 'false brother' Edmund Hickeringill, and attacked the infallibility and textual integrity of the Bible.[62]

The impiety of Hickeringill's writings, which in turn attacked revelation, priesthood, sacraments and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, empowered Sacheverell's transgressions of probity both in repeating the impiety, but also in challenging the authority of the current administration. In total nine extracts from Hickeringill's works were read out as evidence in defence of Sacheverell's authority. The irony here of course was that Edmund Hickeringill was a cleric. Indeed the example of Hickeringill is a useful tool for underscoring the convoluted pathways between the Revolution and eighteenth century. Cambridge educated, Hickeringill experienced the fracturing of religious orthodoxy in the 1640s directly, becoming at different times a Baptist, Quaker and 'swaggering' atheist. At the Restoration, however, Hickeringill conformed to the injunctions of the Church settlement, and until his death in 1708 was an 'orthodox' churchman in Essex. Although conforming to the rubrics of civil and ecclesiastical statute, Hickeringill's 'orthodoxy' was unusual. From the 1660s until the 1700s he was almost continually in dispute with parishioners, local elites and the national church about a series of 'clerical' matters. Tithes, church-fees, the jurisdiction of Church courts, were the subjects of a barrage of controversial publications. Repeatedly put on trials in both civil and ecclesiastical courts, Hickeringill articulated the classical anticlericalism of the radical Protestant. By the 1700s Hickeringill was re-packaging his criticisms under the generic title of indictments of 'priestcraft': his posthumous collections of works were reputed to be deistical. The shift in description from 'puritan radical' to irreligious deist indicates one of the trajectories of the discursive legacy of the Revolution.

V

In conclusion then it is probably worth stepping back to consider again usefulness of the three broad historiographical treatments of the significance of anticlericalism in the early modern period. The concept has played different, and perhaps an increasingly important role in the historical understanding of the consecutive ruptures of early modern society identified as 'the Reformation', the 'English Revolution' and the 'Enlightenment'. Most attention has been paid to the dual social and political function anticlericalism performed in French society in the eighteenth century. Even those who are not *au fait* with the more recent intellectual excursions of Furet, Baker, Chartier and Darnton, will be aware that the Voltaireian assault against 'l'infame' was constitutive of Enlightenment discourses: unshackling human reason and social policy from the tyranny of clerical persecution, evidenced in the Revolutionary desacralisation of French society was the end-product of French anticlericalism. More subtly, recent historians of eighteenth century French history have investigated the cultural and political process of ideological corrosion, whereby the deontological premises of the *ancien regime* were worn away by discourses that undercut the sacredness of Church and Monarchy.[63] The suggestion here is that much of the language of this historiography might usefully be applied to the experiences of English history between 1630 and 1720. Indeed, the late Richard Ashcraft made the first steps in a move towards such suggestions in arguing that while late seventeenth century English anticlericalism had a contributory role in the larger process of the secularisation of society, it also had an important political and intellectual meaning for contemporaries. Drawing from the writings of Weber and Karl Mannheim, Ashcraft suggested that the anticlerical discourses found in the writings of post-revolutionary authors were the

intellectual places where novel (and perhaps modern) understandings of knowledge as a form of 'ideology' emerged from the sociological context of confessional contestation.[64] As one of the key problems exposed during the 1640s and 1650s, debates about the role of the church and the articulation of discourses ranged for and against the cultural or social power of churchmen ought not be marginalised, but placed at the very epicentre of the concerns of early modern historians.

Endnotes.

[1] Cited in C. Hill 'Freethinking and libertinism: the legacy of the English Revolution' in R. Lund (ed) *The Margins of Orthodoxy. Heterodox writing and cultural response 1660-1750* (Cambridge, 1995) 58.

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[3] J.C.D. Clark *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985); idem *Revolution and Rebellion* (Cambridge, 1986).

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[5] See N. Smith *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (New Haven, 1994).

[6] R. Tuck *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651* (Cambridge, 1993).

[7] L. Gowing *Domestic Dangers. Women, work and sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996).

[8] A.B. Worden 'Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate' in *Persecution and Toleration* (ed) W. Sheils *Studies in Church History* 21 (1984) 199-233 at 200. See also J.C. Davis 'Religion and the Struggle for Freedom in the English Revolution' *The Historical Journal* 35 (1992) 507-530, and W. Lamont 'Pamphleteering, the Protestant Consensus and the English Revolution' in R.C. Richardson, G.M. Ridden (eds) *Freedom and the English Revolution. Essays in history and literature* (Manchester, 1986) 72-92.

[9] Compare for example the work of B. Manning *1649. The crisis of the English Revolution* (London, 1992) with A. Fletcher, J. Stevenson (eds.,) *Order & Disorder in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1985).

[10] The conceptual understanding of this process is derived from J. C. Scott *Domination and the arts of resistance. Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

[11] The most illuminating study must remain M. de Certeau 'The Formality of Practices' in *The Writing of History* (New York, 1988).

[12] See M. Braddick *The nerves of state* (Manchester, 1996).

[13] See G. Burgess *Absolute monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven, 1996).

[14] See Q. Skinner *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978) 2 volumes. See also Q. Skinner *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998).r

[15] On the function of conscience see, C. Hill 'From oaths to interest' in *Society and Puritanism in pre-revolutionary England* (London, 1966) 382-419 at 383; Keith Thomas 'Cases of Conscience in seventeenth century England' in John Morrill, Paul Slack, Daniel Woolf (eds) *Public Duty and Private Conscience in seventeenth century England* (Oxford, 1993) 29-56.

[16] M. A. Goldie 'Priestcraft and the birth of Whiggism' in N. Phillipson, Q. Skinner (eds.,) *Political discourse in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1993) 209-231; R. Ashcraft 'Anticlericalism and authority in Lockean political thought' in Lund *The margins of orthodoxy* 73-96; J.A.I. Champion *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken. The Church of England and its enemies 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992); J.A. I. Champion *Republican Learning. John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1670-1722* (Manchester, forthcoming).

[17] See J.A.I. Champion '"To govern is to make subjects believe": anticlericalism, politics and power 1680-1720' in N. Aston, M. Cragoe (eds.) *Anticlericalism in Early modern England* (forthcoming, 2000) which reviews the current historiography.

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[20] For a review of the literature see, J.A.I. Champion 'Europe's Enlightenment and national historiographies: rethinking religion and revolution, 1649-1789' in *Europa/European Review of History* 0 (1993) 73-93.

[21] On the religious dimension see J. Morrill *The nature of the English revolution* (London, 1993) especially Part One 'England's Wars of Religion' 31-176, which engages with some of the institutional issues.

[22] See for example, R. O'Day 'Anatomy of a profession: the clergy of the Church of England' in W.Prest (ed.) *The professions in early modern England* (London, 1987).

[23] See the excellent and much under-rated C. Hill *Economic problems of the Church. From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford, 1956).

[24] See for example the work of Peter Lake and Anthony Milton.

[25] The exception is T. Webster *Godly Clergy in early Stuart England. The Caroline Puritan movement c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge, 1997) esp. 9-122. Some consideration to similar issues in the eighteenth century can be found in W.M. Jacob *Lay people and religion in the early eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1996).

[26] The *locus classicus* of this can be found in C. Hill *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972).

[27] For an understanding of how even 'orthodoxy' was not a fixed point see J.G.A. Pocock 'Within the margins: definitions of orthodoxy' in R. Lund (ed) *The Margins of Orthodoxy* (Cambridge, 1995).

[28] See Clark *English Society* 147 fn 129. For background see R. Cornwall *Visible and Apostolic. The Constitution of the Church in High Church Anglican and Non-Juror Thought* (Delaware, 1993).

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[31] A.M.C. Waterman 'The nexus between theology and political doctrine in Church and Dissent' in K. Haakonssen (ed.) *Enlightenment and Religion. Rational dissent in eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1996) 193-218.

[32] Nelson *A Companion* 483.

[33] J.G.A.Pocock 'Religious freedom and the desacralisation of politics: from the English civil wars to the Virginia Statute' in Merrill D. Petersen, Robert C. Vaughan (eds) *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (Cambridge, 1988) 43-73.

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[38] Collier *A short view* 123.

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[41] Collier *A short view* 128.

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[44] See Anthony *The Jeremy Collier Stage,* 36-8.

[45] J. Dennis *The Usefulness of the Stage* (1698) 125.

[46] See C. Hill *The English Bible and the seventeenth century revolution* (London, 1993).

[47] See Morrill *The nature of the English Revolution.*

[48] J. F. MacLear 'Popular anticlericalism in the Puritan revolution' *Journal of the history of ideas* 17 (1956) 443-470 at 446.

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[51] See T. Harris, P. Seaward, M. Goldie (eds.,) *The politics of religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990).

[52] See J.A.I. Champion '"Willing to Suffer": Law and religious conscience in seventeenth century England', J. McLaren, H. Coward (eds.) *Religious Conscience, the State and the Law. Historical contexts and contemporary significance* (New York, 1999) 13-28.

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[55] See G. Holmes *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London, 1973) 156-78.

[56] See *Historical Manuscripts Commission: Portland Mss* IV 532-33 (2nd March 1709/10).

[57] *HMC Portland Mss IV* 533.

[58] *HMC Portland Mss IV* Ibid 532.

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[61] *The Tryal of Dr. Henry Sacheverell, before the HOUSE of PEERS, for High Crimes and Misdemenours*, (published as the title page indicated 'by Order of the House of Peers', 1710) 224.

[62] *Tryal* 224 citing *Miscellaneous Tracts* Part I 12.

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[64] Ashcraft 'Anticlericalism'.