"My kingdom is not of this world": the politics of religion after the revolution.
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Much has been written about the ecclesiological consequences of the English Revolution.[1] The re-imposition of the statutory foundations of a confessional state in the 1660s, and the partial compromise of that order after the Glorious Revolution, have been regarded as sequential responses to the problem of religious diversity created by two decades of practical freedom after the outbreak of civil war in 1642. Anglican magistracy attempted to put the 'spirit' of religious diversity back in the box. Mark Goldie has laid out a series of important arguments exploring the theories of intolerance, and rival claims of tender conscience and the 'science of toleration' after the Restoration. Conscientious defences of the legitimacy of persecution were matched with practical schemes for eradicating dissent in the early 1680s. At a grassroots level, dissenting communities fought back, countering clerical terrorism with campaigns of engaged public discourse, acts of civil disobedience and clever legal strategies that aimed to compromise the efficacy of persecution.[2] The persistence of languages of comprehension, schism, conformity and toleration into the 1700s suggests that the ideological debate between churchmen and dissenters was right at the core of political conflict.[3] Arguments about the nature of 'Godly rule' that had driven political conflict since the sixteenth century, remained at the heart of public debate into the eighteenth century.[4] Prompted by the revolutionary decades of the mid century, gradually, political structures were shaped to reflect a context of Godly diversity.

One of the immediate and most intractable consequences of the revolutionary decades was a fundamental dispute about the meaning of words. In the communal sphere of the pulpit, and the print culture of the sermon and pamphlet, much of the political conflict of the times was shaped by trying to accrue public legitimacy to a number of national and local religious and political institutions by capturing the intellectual and emotive value of a key vocabulary. The urgency of defining the true meaning of words and concepts like 'true religion', 'popery', 'conscience', 'church' and 'order', and perhaps more importantly attaching them to specific practices and institutions, was profound. Driven by what John Pocock has called the idea of the 'politics of incarnation', such definitions were shaped by theological foundations. There were clearly rival understandings of how Christ's grace and God's will was instantiated in the world: the different theologies of the 'flesh' or of the 'word' empowered a very distinct set of ecclesiastical institutions. Whether one believed that true religion was incarnated in the Church or in the 'spirit' meant a commitment to believing that diverse forms of clerical and political institutions were godly. Religious belief and commitment was prompted by the experience of participation within those institutions (the variety of sacramental functions and ritual ceremonies, pulpit preaching, and 'inner light' prophecy outline some of the variants). In each of these cases, the theological doctrines that underpinned the politics of incarnation had very precise institutional consequences: grace made flesh in the form of Anglican ministry, was a different form of 'church' power, than those who emphasised that inspiration was by the word alone (as in 'Faith comes by hearing').[5]

The legacy of the fracturing and contested experience of the 1640s and 1650s meant that there were very different communal contexts for the definition of the primary vocabulary of religious truth. Put simply, bishops saw the world in a different way to the perceptions of sectarians. They employed the commonplace language of religious truth to describe this world, investing their *episteme* with legitimacy. The fundamental difficulty was that others – Quakers, Presbyterians, Baptists and later still 'men of reason' – used the same words with different meanings. This was no mere semantic or philological dispute confined to the world of discourse, but was intimately related to the lived experience of each man, woman and child in the country. The language of orthodoxy, translated into civic policy by conformist Anglicans after 1660, from the perspective of Quakers in Southwark, Baptists in Bristol, or Roman Catholics in Norfolk, was no simple and harmless discursive manoeuvre. The phrase 'antichristian persecution' was easily substituted for 'religious truth'. Likewise sectarian claims for tender conscience looked suspiciously like seditious rebellion to many conforming clergy and laity.[6] That these linguistic games were more than simply a question of 'turn' can be illustrated by looking at the long running debates about the word 'Church'.[7]

I

Defining the nature of the 'Church' was both a theological and political challenge. The Restoration politics of religion was driven by this process of enforced meaning. The 1650s had seen repeated ideological contests over the simple meaning of the word – did *ecclesia* mean church, or congregation? Were Churches scared spaces or spiritual communities? Was the Church simply the body of ordained ministers, or the entire collective of Christians (fallen and saved)?[8] After 1660 one of the most significant, persistent and profoundly practical issues, where conceptual, theological, legal and social conflict converged, was the relationship between 'churches' and 'conventicles'.[9] The restored Anglican regime used public magistracy to render illegal and seditious any voluntary religious meetings. Following the model of the Elizabethan statutes against sectaries, Conventicle Acts of 1664, and more rigorously in 1670, provided statutory provision that underlay provisions for persecution. The enforcement of these acts was (as with many statutes) dependent on local circumstances: but at times (such as in urban London) in the early 1670s and 1680s the full force of the law was turned against many nonconformist communities. Studies of quarter sessions records, and ecclesiastical surveys, from the two decades after 1660s indicate a variety of local experiences. When the various civil and religious interests co-ordinated their efforts they were a truly terrifying force. Exploring some of the diverse understandings and responses to this issue will throw light on the radical forms of epistemological incommensurability that bedevilled late Stuart society.[10]

The confrontation between definitions of church and conventicle, can be seen in a short (but representative) pamphlet by Thomas Ellwood, one of the most engaged and persistent Quaker controversialists of the 1670s and 1680s. A man at the cutting edge of exploiting legal process to escape the persecutory attentions of the established order, Ellwood repeatedly contested the applicability of many of the anti-dissent laws. The conventicle acts, applied with renewed enthusiasm after the defeat of exclusion, were the subject of his *A discourse concerning riots* (1683). The work was prompted by the iniquity of imprisoning Quakers under a charge of riot when they were 'only being at a peaceable meeting to worship God'. Clarity of linguistic meaning and

precision of legal definition argued that 'riot' (derived from the French 'rioter') was a form of brawl: as Ellwood concluded 'This is enough to shew how *inapplicable* the word Riot, in its proper and true signification, is to a *peaceable, quiet, Religious Meeting*'. Exploiting orthodox texts like Cowell's *Interpreter,* and Lambarde's *Eirenarcha* (as well as standard justice manuals), the point was underscored that a riot was a disorderly meeting contrived for some evil doing. The important components were the prospect of violence undertaken in an illegal act which was injurious to another. Peaceful worship of God could not be a riot. Cleverly, turning the intention of the Conventicle Act on its head, Ellwood argued that the statute in fact made a distinction between religious meetings and riots, when it declared that such meetings were illegal only if the numbers in attendance were four more than the family who lived in the house. This, claimed the Quaker, meant that the act 'doth not permit Riots: but … doth permit religious meetings'. The silent conduct of Quaker meetings also excluded it from the category of riots. Repeatedly declaiming 'such meetings are not riots', Ellwood implored both grand and petty juries to take note, and consider 'How dishonourable a reflection it would be both to the government, and to the religion established thereby, If peaceable, quiet, religious meetings, conscientiously holden only and alone for the worship and service of God … should be judicially declared Riots'. Quaker meetings were defined by 'an innocent, meek, passive, and truly Christian behaviour and deportment'. Like many who attended voluntary meetings, Ellwood simply refused to acknowledge that such meetings were anything other than Godly. With such an attitude it eventually became manifest that communities convinced of their theological duty would persist in their conduct.[11]

To Anglican clergyman, such meetings were worse than riots posing a clear and persistent danger to the established order in church and state. The state papers of the 1660s and 1670s establish that the government was convinced that conventicles were fundamentally seditious. Repeatedly, Royal proclamations and episcopal letters enjoined the prosecution of such meetings to protect the nation from the dual mischief of anarchy and sedition.[12] One of the longer and more learned meditations was composed by James Norris, rector of Aldbourn in Wiltshire, in the early 1660s but published posthumously by his son John (later to write against John Toland) in 1685. That the text was still pertinent in the 1680s indicates the persistance of the issues at stake. In defending the legitimacy of prosecution of illegal meetings, Norris outlined a classic account of the Church of England as the unique instrument mediating divine authority to the community. He mobilised scripture, patristics, and canon and civil law, to establish that the Church had 'power to make laws to bind all her children'. Making a fundamental distinction between the *ecclesia collectiva* and the *ecclesia representativa*, he clarified, 'by Church I understand not all the number of the faithfull, but those that have lawfull rule and government of the church'. Although acknowledging that outward forms of worship were variable according to the diversity of times and places, he insisted that, once publicly constituted, the church had authority. To disobey the church was to disobey God.[13] Deploying the example of Constantine, Norris argued that all 'souls' (including ministers) were subject to the authority of the Crown. Kings were nursing fathers who used discipline and government to uphold God's rule: like Uzzah they could neither burn incense nor sacrifice to God. 'Noncompliance' to royal commands was sacrilege.[14]

The parish was the natural form of ecclesiastical administration. These 'scripture Churches' were contrasted with the meetings where 'people scattered about, some here, and some there, in several parts of the Country'. That such people 'should voluntarily associate and combine themselves in a distinct body, under what Ministry they please, and that best suits with their humour, and call themselves a Church' was against God's order. God had decreed the people should be divided into separate flocks, and that each flock should have its own shepherd. There should be no 'random' shifting according to private fancy and lust: God's providence had created pastors with authority. To allow diversity was to encourage a barren schism and profanity. Such unlawful assemblies were prompted by a faith which was 'mere faction'. As Norris explained, this religion was 'but a professed disobedience to their Superiours, and a studied opposition to the truth of that which (through the Mercy of God) is established in our Church'. Their 'holiness' was simply a 'foolish zeal' premised upon 'their own inventions'. Such conviction was not simply damaging to the individuals concerned, but 'as soon as ever they fansie themselves to be converted, they can teach their King how to govern, and their Ministers how to preach. They can tell what Laws are fit for the Kingdom, and what Orders for the Church; yea, they are presently so illuminated, that they can see every blemish in both, when in themselves, their companions and families, they cannot see beams and intolerable Evils.'[15]

To allow conventicles to exist was (as Augustine put it) to abandon Jerusalem (the type of the holy city) for Jericho (a type of the world). Like those who helped with the building of the temple under Zerubbabel, who only pretended to be Godly, their 'pretext of Piety and Conscience is both the Veil wherewith they hide their unparalleled Pride, Malice and Hypocrisie; and their Bait wherewith they catch simple Souls in their Net'. It was true, Norris acknowledged, that the New Testament had described a variety of public worship based on the diversity of gifts in their teachers (the churches of Paul, Apollos and Cephas which Hobbes took as a model of primitive independency) but this reinforced the point that each parish had specific authority, rather than any license of worship. There was therefore (and Church fathers, Councils and even some contemporary brethren agreed) an absolute injunction against 'the liberty that People are apt to take of their own heads to wander from their own Pastours, to hear Strangers'.[16]

Norris was explicit in his condemnation of those who contrived 'private, irregular and disorderly meetings' against 'publick church assemblies'. They were the work of Satan. The spaces of the restored church were as sacred and holy as the temples and tabernacles of Jewish antiquity: as he explained, 'as in Gospel-times we have the like promises of God's special presence in the publick Congregations of his People'. Parish religion was understood as a direct incarnation of God's grace. Public worship was designed to be a place where a community met, confident that it was 'a place where God will vouchsafe to be more graciously present in his worship, than elsewhere'. Exploiting Henry Spelman's writings on the Jewish temple, Norris reiterated the point that while there may have been elements of worship which were historically specific to the ceremonial, Levitical and Judaical law, the third element ('simple worship, Prayer and devotion' was universal and 'publick, for ever, and not private'. Christ had turned the doves and oxen out of the temple, thereby terminating the sacrificial functions of the Jewish temple, 'yet the sanctification of it to be an

house of prayer ever remained'. This was a repeated and explicit claim: the sanctification of antiquity was the same in the present churches, they were places 'to which God hath by promise assured his own gracious and heavenly presence and blessing'. The presence of the Holy Ghost was the one fundamental distinction between authorised public, and illegal private worship: churches were consecrated to holy purpose, private houses were not, the 'beauty of holiness' did confer grace. Norris noted that Spelman (writing in the earlier part of the century) had been anxious about the proliferation of sectarians who threatened to turn God 'out of Churches into Barns, and from thence again into Fields, and Mountains, and under Hedges: and the Office of the Ministry (robbed of all dignity and respect) be as contemptible as those places; all Order, Discipline and Church-government left to the newness of Opinion and Mens fancies'. Norris confirmed that the civil war had seen exactly this type of diversity, when 'soon after, as many kinds of Religions spring up, as there are Parish Churches within England, every contentious and ignorant Person cloathing his Fancy with the Spirit of God, and his Imagination with the Gift of Revelation.' Order was Godly. Injunctions to hear the word of God ('Faith comes by hearing') were useless unless the preacher was publicly authorised. Ministers could 'not be successful in their ministry without a church, they may talk as usurpers; but not preach, as God's ambassadors'. Ordination gave inward power, but 'external execution' came from the Church and its governor. Put very succinctly Norris claimed that, 'God calleth ordinarily by his Church, her voice is his'.[17]

In any society there could be only one faith, one church. Christ was head of only one divine body not two. If there was diversity, only one church might be the spouse of Christ, meaning the other 'must needs be an harlot'. All men and women, 'all soules and companies' were either of the Church of Christ or the 'synagogue of Satan'. Those who separated from the established order were 'congregations of evil doers'. 'House creeping preachers' who worshiped in private were like intruders into the house of the holy. Christ had always been 'a publick orderly preacher, and never a private irregular conventicler'. Neither did the apostles ever preach contrary to the public religion. While later churchmen, under the persecution in the early church, did preach in private, this was no model for contemporary nonconformity, because then there was no publicly constituted church, now there was. Norris' arguments were hardly original, but they were clear: without public ordinance there was no grace. Sacred authority was received by commission, therefore the powers of ministry were 'restrained to lawfull appointment'. What he called a 'ministry of intruders' were not only corrupting of Christianity and politically seditious, they were also soteriologically ineffective.[18]

That Norris wrote, not from a detached position of theological learning, but with a personal conviction and bitterness prompted by his own experiences of the 'sinfull and pernicious effects' of dissent in Wiltshire, is clear from his concluding reflections. Noting that, 'as a King cannot endure a rival with him in his Kingdom, nor a husband in the Marriage-bed, so neither can a minister in his Parish', Norris lamented that until the 1660s, 'my parish was a Virgin, pure and undefiled, free from all invadours and underminers of her Chastity'. Until the 1660s, his parish (of about a thousand souls) had been entire, unanimous, and 'constant at all parts of public worship, more free from all inclination to schism, separation, or any of the raigning Epidemical faults of this age'. Unfortunately Satan had erected 'altare contra altare'

and a 'conventicle against the Church'. The consequence was disunity and chaos: the congregation was 'miserably divided': a chaste wife had fallen into the unlawful embraces of strangers. Many who had been regular attendants had totally gone off … and for the space of several years, have not set their foot over the threshold of God's house. Others refused even to let their children receive public baptism. Those who persisted in such 'clanclary and irregular conventions' had made 'a Rupture in the body of Christ, and … divide[d] Church from Church, and … set up Church against Church,'. This was to 'introduce all manner of confusion in Churches and Families; and not onely disturb, but in a little time destroy the power of Godliness, purity of Religion, peace of Christians, and set open a wide gap to bring in Atheism, Popery, Heresie, and all manner of wickedness'. Norris' anxiety, reflected widely amongst the established Church and enshrined in intentions of the statutes, was that such dissent would become (as in the 'late years of war and confusion') 'great Engine to pull down the powers then in being'. Echoing Hobbes' account of the successive sectarian rebellions of the civil wars, Norris underscored the dangers of Presbyterian nonconformity, which could all to easily deteriorate into sectarian anarchy and even atheism.[19]

The central theme of Norris' work – the identification of the conventicle as both a politically subversive and spiritually contaminated institution - was a staple of Anglican Royalist thought. While periods of 'indulgence' in the early 1670s and mid 1680s established that a measure of license might not see the nation plunged into disorder, most of the political nation remained to be convinced, not just of the practicality in terms of policy, but of its godliness. The question of disciplining the spaces of nonconformity was ultimately an issue of state power: here theories of state building were mixed up with languages of ecclesiology. Defining the relative limits of religious and civil authority had traditionally been undertaken to preserve the priority of Godly Rule: the political problem of dissent and non-conformity, raised in a very apparent way the difficulties of basing authority upon a unitary conception of church and state. The practice of religious diversity after 1660 prompted a reconsideration of these traditional ecclesiological discourses. By exploring an example of how one man negotiated the difficulties of marrying order and conscience it will be possible to tease out some of the permanent tensions between the discourses and the practices of governance.

II

To Isaac Archer the stark choices confronting him in the early 1660s were a direct consequence of the turmoil of the revolutionary decades of the 1640s and 1650s. Born in the year of the Irish Rebellion, Archer was brought up under the radical influence of his father. An Independent preacher, William Archer, had approved of the execution of Charles, an act he replicated in minor (as his son recalled) by cutting out the King's head from a portrait. Educated at Cambridge, Isaac, despite his hostility to the Book of Common Prayer, and the manifest disapproval of his father, sought accommodation and living within the restored Church of England. As his diary shows, Isaac was torn between the need for financial security, the demands of conscience, and filial duty towards his father and his theological commitments. He acknowledged that without his father's financial support, 'that I had no other way to live but by the ministry'.[20] In conforming to the established Church (thereby in his father's view supping with the antichrist), he compromised the obligations of son to father, he made

the issue of conscience even more complex. Displaying the characteristic uncertainty of other spiritual diaries of the period, Archer looked constantly for 'signes' to confirm that he was taking the providentially appropriate course. For example, he pondered the fact that his stammer made it difficult to read out the set liturgy, whereas when he extemporised in prayer or sermons with fluency his impediment was absent, evidence of divine judgement. Sensing the younger fellow's vacillation, Henry Ferne, Master of Trinity and Bishop of Chester, intervened (at the prompting of Henry Dearsly) to ease the stricter requirements of conformity, allowing Archer exemptions in subscribing.[21]

Archer determined that it was God's providence that had given him 'favour in the eyes of some from whom I could not expect it'. Unfortunately this was not the way his father understood the events. Noting that 'I had promised my father I would not conforme, meaning thoroughly (for I only heard service, neither meddled with the surplisse etc)' Archer 'somewhat dubiously and fraudulently' (his words) confirmed his integrity. Unfortunately his father had been primed by a listing of 'nonconformists' on which his son's name did not appear. This caused an unhappy breach that persisted in one way or another until his father's death in 1670, and almost certainly caused Isaac to be disinherited. William 'brake out into many passionate words', but offered to support his son if he desisted in conforming. Isaac, vexed and with an unruly temper refused to speak, added paternal disobedience to his sins: as a consequence 'he told me also that I should not see his face till I had humbled myself for my disobedience to him, and sin against God'. Consulting with his Cambridge friends, Isaac was convinced that his father had no authority over his conscience, thus in resisting his demand any error was not compounded with filial disobedience. A sharp and saucy correspondence followed, with father berating son, 'that he never thought that one sprung from his loynes would plead for Baal; and that if he thought I adored those abominable idols, and danced in that molten calfe etc. he would come and stampe it to powder, and make me drinke it etc'. Isaac, shaken by the anger of his father's letters, made ready to quit Trinity and be accommodated 'in a nonconformist's house'. Deeply troubled by the dispute with his father, 'the workings of my conscience were great, and strong, yet would not my proud stomach come down or yield'.[22]

The trials of this young man, an educated scholar, drawn to the ministry but compromised by his loyalty to his father and his own conscience, are emblematic of the difficulties that faced many in the 1660s and 1670s. Faced with the opprobrium of his father, but also the practical difficulties of supporting himself, the issue of conformity was complex. Unable to live in company with his father, and cut off financially, Isaac eventually took the decision (aided by counsel from Trinity men) to conform in Easter, 1662, by taking the sacrament. This was momentous for him: as he described 'It was so solemnly done that never any thing moved my affections as that did, in so much I could not forbeare weeping at the receiving of it'. His father did not lightly give up the battle for Isaac's conscience, and writing repeatedly, finally in August (having read the act of uniformity and presumably horrified at the prospect of the danger his son's conformity might do) offered to maintain him at home. In response to the charge that he was disobeying the fifth commandment, Isaac 'pleaded the power and command of the King, whom we should both obey'.[23] Turning away the man sent to collect him from Cambridge, he invoked conscience, which his father

dismissed as 'pride and not tenderness'. In contrast to the commands and intreaties of his father, Trinity College offered money and place. On top of £5 from a benefactor (which he readily accepted), offers of a school at Wilmington and Ely, or a readership in London were temptations that Isaac resisted. Instead, despite the fact he was not old enough for consecration, he resolved to be ordained by the visiting Laudian Bishop Matthew Wren. His father must have been appalled. Isaac was tall. Through Ferne's good services the question of his age was ignored in his ordination examination. Although willing to waive the age requirements, the examiner was keen to confirm the orthodoxy of the young ordinand. Asked to prove that the scriptures were God's word, the examiner pressed him to 'tell him The argument, as he called it'. Finally twigging, 'at last I said the authority of the Church was a good outward argument'. As a taste of his subscription to the authority of the Church, the examiner insisted (citing Augustine) that it was the 'best argument … who said that he would not believe the scriptures to be the scriptures except the Church had said so'. Having submitted to this authority, Isaac was given his holy orders and presented with a college living at Arrington just outside Cambridge.[24]

This was the start of his pursuit of a financially viable and theologically acceptable living. In one sense this then is a story that gives us a model of how, breaking away from the conscientious circles of his father, a young man made his way by subscribing and conforming: a miniature of the process of restoring the Church in the 1660s. Some of the elements are emblematic of the difficulties that faced many: the tension between conscience and place; the anxiety about providential encouragement; the burden of the memory of the struggles of the previous two decades. This conflict between father and son about the right actions, and the meaning of conformity, describe the sorts of incommensurable worldviews that prompted religious dissonance. What Isaac saw as acceptable compromise, William dismissed as bowing to idols. What Isaac saw as duties to his King, William regarded as ungodly disobedience to the magistracy of 'family government'. What is also exemplary is the tone of the relationship between father and son: passionate, angry, apologetic, vacillating by turns. William banished his son and welcomed him; each in turned refused to speak; persistently engaged the dialogue between the two consciences underscores a point we often forget – belief was a process constantly readdressed and revisited. Certainly Isaac wavered in his commitment, while William undeviating from his belief that the Book of Common Prayer was a device of Baal, repeatedly relented in the exile of his son.

Throughout Archer's diary there is a fragile conviction that God's providence protected him for service: whether surviving the plague, or serious injury at the hands of rolling horses or friendly rapiers, Isaac believed that God had marked him out for special favour. He was doing the right thing. His ability to conform while maintaining the integrity of his own conscience allows a window into the flexibility of conformity after the restoration. Archer did not simply relinquish his intimacy with the 'non-conformist' circle, and enact and impose the Book of Common Prayer. In fact, just as he had done in Cambridge he tried to balance the demands of the established order with conscientious pursuit of other 'meetings'. Edward Fowler's ministry in St Giles Cripplegate in the 1680s establishes that there were patterns of 'accommodating' conformity. Archer too (and one suspects he was not unique) made his ministry comfortable for those with tender consciences (he noted, 'I did not signe with the

crosse because it gave offence'), while himself attending other more Godly places. In another instance he baptised a child without the canonical provision of godparents, nor 'by the service book'. It turned out that the family were Quakers, and indeed so impressed with Archer that they invited him 'to preach to them, of his family sometimes privately'. Acknowledging that 'twas forbidden by authority, and because it would keep them the more from hearing in publick, I refused to hearken to it'.[25] He knew the limits of accommodation. Certainly Archer took his public ministry seriously: for example, he took great pains at Chippenham, where he discovered the sacrament had not been given for twenty years. He preached twice about it 'laying downe such qualifications as the strictest divines make use of, and went to the houses of such as would receive, to speake with them concerning so weighty a busines'. Having explained these 'grounds', he noted 'I left it to their owne consciences what to doe'. In other cases he organised catechism for the young, or berated individuals who spent more time in the alehouse than in church. His flexibility sometimes attracted the attentions of more rigorous conformists who, for example, informed the local JP about his failure to keep holy days.[26]

The diary in the 1660s, shows he constantly revisited the question of his conformity: his chief design, he admitted, 'in being a minister, next to God's Glory, was that I might be more at leisure for the good of my soule by making that both my generall and particular, which others made their generall calling'. If conformity was implied in compromising this ambition, he was willing to abandon it. He had agreed to preach in the 'private place' of Sir John Russell which allowed a greater godliness. Inspired by conviction that he should not 'act against my conscience by baulking any truths of God to please men', he 'left off conforming' briefly in March 1665, although he still offered to preach to his parishioners. Indeed he managed to make an arrangement whereby he eventually held a living (and more importantly an income) while employing another to read services from the Book of Common prayer. For most of the 1670s and 1680s, Archer had ministerial duties in a variety of parishes where he came to an accommodation either with the local community or the Godly patron. The device of employing a reader (and thereby avoiding accusations that he did not employ the Common Prayer, while preserving his own conscience) was connived at by ecclesiastical superiors. In the case of one reader, John Goodwin, Archer ultimately dispensed with his services, because he was 'so violent against nonconformists' behaviour which dissuaded them from attending the church.[27] Such is the evidence of how religious diversity could not be contained by the restored church.

That Archer is emblematic of the tension between order and conscience, is further illustrated by his response to the momentary statutory indulgence of diversity in 1672. His diary recorded that this opportunity did not dissuade him nor his friends from attending the established church ('none forsook the public'). Indeed he had anxieties that the project was 'dangerous as to the growth of popery'. Despite insisting that he was 'more satisfied in the Church of England than ever', a license was obtained for a Presbyterian meeting in his house at Chippenham.[28] Here Archer took advantage of the indulgence to regularise a practice of private meetings that he and others routinely undertook. There was a long tradition of participating in such voluntary gatherings, alongside public provision. Very often these meetings supplemented the sermons and prayers of the established church. That Archer was able to cross over between the

public and the private meeting without apparently compromising either his conscience or his status in the eyes of either his parishioners or ecclesiastical superiors, tells us something significant about the flexible nature of conformity. Archer acknowledged that by some he was thought a 'fanatick' (partially because of his father's reputation) but he remained committed to the Church of England, even after the acts of 1689 made nonconformity tolerable. [29]

iv

From 1689 to the 1720s the legal foundations of the confessional state shifted from a bedrock of statutory coercion to one of a compromise between privilege and voluntary persuasion. There was an adjustment from the assumptions embodied in the writings of Norris, to a state of practical accommodation described in Archer's dairy. It one sense, the experience of the half-century after the execution of the king in 1649 had established that the traditional ecclesiological structure was both dangerous (it might easily be captured by enthusiasts or papists) and redundant (it was incapable ultimately of successful imposing conformity throughout the kingdom). Political thinkers like Hobbes and Locke have been characterised by some historians as developing theories of political sovereignty and liberty applicable to a post-confessional society. Such historical accounts do, however, considerable damage to the integrity of both men's writings and to our understanding of the nature of their society. Hobbes' subtle and complicated war against priestcraft persisted to the end of his life, and indeed had a powerful afterlife in the writings of men like Charles Blount, John Toland and Matthew Tindal, and the clandestine scribal texts of the 1700s. One might plausibly argue that Locke's writings on toleration exercised more influence over the shape of the late Stuart polity than that of the *Treatises* on government. In a political culture where the most powerful national institutions of governance were a protestant monarchy, the Church of England and parish office holders, ecclesiological definitions were by default central to 'constitutional' debate. For many contemporaries the starting point for thinking about the nature of public authority and the duties of individuals, was ecclesiastical. The nature of the Church and the authority of churchmen (and the religion they embodied) was the first and last thing any individual encountered: theories of the Church were arguably more significant, than theories of the state.

The period did see a complex and subtle restructuring of ways of experiencing and thinking about society and religion. There developed an intellectual distinction between a view of the sacred which assumed there was only one 'true religion', and a more relativistic perception that there were many 'religions'. The experience of ecclesiastical diversity during the decades of the revolution and its persistence after the Restoration, meant that many people at all levels of society knew that there were (and indeed could be) more than one church. What the revolution did was compromise the purity of a singular 'church-state': it was no longer unthinkable to imagine a society either with a different church, or perhaps with many churches. That these possibilities were still acute is manifest in an episode that convulsed the political nation shortly after the accession of George I.

III

In 1717 one of the most controversial assaults of the eighteenth century was launched against the legitimacy of the Church of England. Despite being the 'the most bitter ideological conflict of the century', it has received very little historical attention.[30] The immediate political consequence was the suspension of the constitutional institutions of the Church. Clerical Convocation, fount of stentorian polemical hostility since the mid-1690s, was dismissed and neutered by regal injunction. In the following year the radical commonwealth ministry led by Sunderland and Stanhope enacted statutory reform of the legislation that infringed the civic identity of dissenting communities. Although many of the historical accounts of the period barely allude to this event, it was a moment of important constitutional meaning, disentangling at an institutional level, the inter-twined interests of Church and State. The paradox of the affair is underscored when one considers that the controversy was launched, not by an irreligious deist or incendiary atheist, but by a clergyman, royal chaplain, and a bishop. Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, had by his writings, said one contemporary, 'done more harm to the Church of Christ and the Protestant cause than any man living'.[31] The suspension of Convocation in 1717 was not simply a political act, but an ecclesiological one too: it brought to a conclusion an attack on the Church that had been initiated in its most bloody form by the execution of Archbishop Laud in 1645.

Hoadly was a churchman. Often abused as a turbulent Whig, he was, nevertheless, a believing Christian, a conforming minister, and a moderate episcopalian. In disputes with Presbyterians, he insisted upon the function of episcopal ordination against the rival claims of the dissenting interest. When defending the 'reasonableness of conformity to the Church of England', Hoadly described the limits of claims of conscience against the rival authority of a national establishment. Contrary to many on the episcopal bench, he combined subscription to a moderate political conformity to the practices of the state religion with an emphasis upon the prerogative of private individual judgement in matters of belief. Following in the traditions of the 'latitudinarian' Churchmen of the Restoration, Hoadly enjoined the arguments of Thomas Hobbes, as a suitable model for understanding the relationship between obligation and conscience. Public religion was a matter of political sovereignty and decent order, while conviction, faith and salvation were private issues between God and the individual. The example of Namaan who bowed the knee to the idol of Rimon as a civic act of obligation, while retaining true belief in God, was advanced as a suitable model for the conduct of Christian life.[32]

The paradox of Hoadly, was one deep in the seams of Augustan society: the anticlerical priest challenging sacerdotalism in the name of true religion.[33] The anticlericalism of such men as Hoadly was not unique. As the studies of Whig ideology have established, attacks upon the 'priestcraft' and intolerance of the Church of England were fundamental to the development of party identity from the 1690s.[34] This was not simply an hostility towards specific clerical institutions, but engaged with assumptions about the 'politics of incarnation'. The successive ecclesiological crises of the 1700s, which found violent expression in the turbulence of the Sacheverell Trial and its aftermath, were driven by a convinced, but devout, hostility to the *de jure divino* claims of the high-church, repeatedly couched in terms of a defence of true religion. In contrast to the practical atheism of the High

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Enlightenment, the thrust of this polemic in the English context engaged directly with the nature of public religion. It was a crisis of clerical authority rather than a more fundamental crisis of religion. Men like Hoadly recognised that there was an intimate connection between claims to a spiritual *ordo* in the parish and the exercise of social power in the constitution.[35]

Hoadly's sermon, *The nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ*, was delivered before King George I, at the Royal Chapel in St James, on Sunday March 31st 1717. Published 'by his Majesties Special Command', in London, Dublin, Edinburgh and New York, the sermon achieved well over fifteen editions in 1717. William Law described it as an attempt 'to dissolve the Church as a Society'.[36] Taking the Scriptural utterance of Christ recorded in *John* 18.36 -'Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world' as its fundamental text, Hoadly applied Hobbist historical linguistics to the meaning of the phrase. As Hobbes had illustrated at great length in *Leviathan*, taking the use of words like 'spirit' and 'angel' in Scripture as his subject, such 'names' tended to lose their original meaning over time. Hoadly wrote of 'the alteration of Meaning annexed to certain sounds' so that the 'signification' of a word came to stand for a 'complication of notions, as distinct from the original intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as Darkness is to Light'. Remedy lay in a return to 'the original of things', found in the words and practice of Christ. Although 'words and sounds' had a powerful effect on the minds of men, their mutations did not change the nature of things. Working through key vocabulary - 'religion', 'worship', 'prayer' - Hoadly drew a distinction between original Christianity and contemporary practice: virtues and integrity, spirit and truth had be supplanted by a variety of self-interested and corrupt modes. Recovering the language of the New Testament was the best method for finding the 'original intentions of such words'. This was especially important for correct understanding of the 'kingdom of Christ'. Originally this phrase had identified those small number of people who believed Christ to be the messiah 'or those who subjected themselves to Him'. Importantly the 'kingdom' was 'not of this world'.[37]

Building upon this scriptural vocabulary, Hoadly expounded a reading that undermined claims by the clergy to exercise a sacred authority derived from Christ. He was unambiguous: it was clear that Christ 'hath, in those points, left behind him, no visible, humane *Authority*; no *Vicegerents*, who can be said properly to supply his place; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the consciences or religion of his people'. As contemporaries were swift to note, this undercut the very notion of a Christian authority delegated to a human institution for the distribution of saving grace. In remodelling the economy of incarnation, Hoadly had struck out the sacred foundations of all clerical institution: by removing any fundamental claims to *ordo,* Hoadly purposively compromised any independent claims to *jurisdictio*, in the process deliberately revising the relationship between magistracy and *sacerdos*. The lower house of Convocation rebutted Hoadly's arguments: the sermon tended 'to subvert all government and discipline in the Church of Christ, and reduce his kingdom to a state of anarchy and confusion'. The Church of Christ was left defenceless and bereft of authority, 'without any visible human authority to judge censure, or punish offenders in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation'.[38]

Hoadly's immediate intention had been to un-pick the common assumption that the Church of Christ was coincident with the established Church of England. In particular his target was the resurgent assertion that the defining essence of the established church was its sacramental capacity. Provoked by the clericalist arguments of non-juring polemicists like George Hickes who asserted that the Church was Christ's body on earth, that the Clergy were his vicegerents and baptism was a means of entry into a spiritual corporation, Hoadly rejected the contention of churchmen that they 'stand in God's stead'.[39] Although the controversy had enormous implications for the relationship between Church and State (could the civil state deprive recalcitrant priests?) and Church and Laity (could clergymen discipline dissenting parishioners?), the thrust of the argument focused upon the status of the established Church. For men like Hickes, establishing the visibility of the Church from the days of Christ to their time was essential: ministerial priests derived their 'function' from the spiritual authority of the Holy Ghost and administered the kingdom of Christ in both 'his kingly as well as his priestly office'. The succession of ordination by the laying on of hands was unbroken.[40]

Like the Whig controversialist Matthew Tindal, Hoadly intended to rescue 'the Church of Christ from ecclesiastical tyranny'. [41] The basis of this argument rested upon a Hobbist reading of Christ's sovereignty over his own kingdom. The principle of 'whosoever hath such an *Authority* of making laws, is so far a King' meant that if Christ has delegated his authority to a body of 'interpreters' he would have lost his authority. Christ's laws and sanctions related to 'another state after this'. The associated economy of rewards and punishments were 'not of this world'.[42] For Hoadly, true faith was freely chosen and not the product of force, punishment or coercion: for this reason, rewards and punishments in this life could not be effective or instrumental for salvation. Christ alone was 'King, Lawgiver and Judge'. Those who argued from the example of other 'visible societies, and other visible kingdoms of this world' that Christ's kingdom was similar were simply wrong. For men to claim Christ's legacy was both deceitful and wrong: 'they have set up to themselves the Idol of an unintelligible Authority, both in belief and worship and practice; in words under Jesus Christ, but in deed and in truth over him'. The attempt of the Church of England to set up a rival jurisdiction over the conscience and conduct of the laity 'destroys the Rule and Authority of Jesus Christ, as King'.[43] Concluding his sermon with a swell of invective against the false traditions of clerical jurisdiction, and delivered before the new monarchy (perhaps encouraged by the King himself), Hoadly's sermon acted as a platform for radical ecclesiological reform. The suspension of Convocation, and in the following year the repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act and the projected suspension of the Test Act were high water marks in civil retrenchment of clerical authority.

To Churchmen like Francis Atterbury writing in the 1690s and 1700s, any assault upon the 'rights, powers and privileges' of the Church was not only impiety but blasphemous.[44] Christian institutions and officers were material incarnations of the divinity of God. The visible marks of the true Church, embodied in the high and non-juring traditions after 1689 were badges of soteriological competence. With its Cyprianic emphasis upon episcopacy as the benchmark for correct sacramental administration this ideology regarded clergyman as ministers of Christ, mediators 'empowered and authorised to negotiate and transact for God'. This idea of the

unbroken apostolic succession of bishops, priests and deacons as the stewards of God's mysteries was directly contrary to the vision advanced by Hoadly. As the example of the trial and aftermath of Henry Sacheverell in 1710, indicates the clash between the distinct ecclesiologies had massive political resonance. The belief that the Church was a key institution in the religious and political administration of society lay behind the attempt to reinvigorate its legal and economic status. Only too aware that the 'Church was in Danger' from Whig ministries in the 1700s and 1710s, counter proposals to refurbish the disciplinary powers of Church courts and to improve the material life of churchmen were made when Tory ministers were in power. Although these attempts were couched in the languages of *renovatio* and refurbishment, they were in effect a serious attempt at the modernisation of clerical power. When Hoadly claimed then that the 'kingdom of Christ was not of this world' he was engaging in an explicitly political debate.[45]

The example of Hoadly allows us to rethink the consequences of 1649, and the relationship between Christianity and Enlightenment in England. In his writings, especially in the sermon of 1717, it is possible to see radical anticlerical language, side by side with a sincere scriptural piety. The purchase of Hoadly's polemic underscores that the problem of public religion was not simply a conceptual matter, but a parochial one too. Reforming the practice and beliefs of Churchmen was the way to establishing a true and virtuous polity. The conflict, then, amongst a variety of Christian discourses was ultimately an institutional battle, rather than a straightforward confrontation between the Godly and the ungodly, or between reason and religion. Whereas the earlier discourses attempted to negotiate between civil *jurisdictio* and priestly *ordo*, the later discussion displaced the immediate concern with the sacred powers of the 'Church', to focus on the relationship between conscience and community. At the core of this shift was not simply an argument about the priority of claims of conscience, but also importantly a redefinition of the nature of clerical institutions. *Sacerdos* implied no public *auctoritas*, or as Hoadly put it, the church had no corporate authority and therefore no public role in shaping religious ceremonies and duties.[46] As the controversy over Hoadly's sermon indicates, the language of religious truth was the forum, rather than the butt, of these disputes. Historians have attempted to document how the Reformation debate about the relationship between church and state (*regnum* against *sacerdotium*) modulated into negotiation between the claims of conscience and order. Both sets of conceptual discourses were ecclesiological, but between the 1640s and the 1690s there was a subtle but distinct shift of emphasis, best understood in the change of vocabulary from church and state, to religion and state.

Despite the persisting authority of Christian discourses and institutions, after the revolution the religious culture of the nation became pluralistic and adaptive rather than monolithic and inflexible. Post-1660, the increasing emphasis upon a 'reasonable' religion was accompanied by competing assertions of the pastoral, sacramental and divinity of Godly institutions. As 'non-conformity' became Dissent so the varieties of 'Christianities' became multiplied. The relationships between these different, converging and competing forms of religious experience and expressions were complex. The cultural motors of this religious change have been identified in a variety of ways: the languages of a 'second' reformation, of secularisation, and of 'enlightenment' have all been used to describe the transformation. The dynamic of

debate was not simply about the relative merits of reason and revelation, or conducted between deist and priest. Dialogue rather than confrontation, appropriation rather than rejection, and redefinition rather than invention are the appropriate vocabularies to describe the relationship.

There is no doubt that the institutions of ecclesiastical authority came under considerable political attack after the revolution of the 1640s and 1650s. Ecclesiological controversy underpinned the successive political crises of the 1670s, 1680s, 1700s and 1710s: behind the legislation of the Clarendon Code, the repeated Declarations of Indulgence, the Toleration Act, the politics of occasional conformity, and the Convocation crisis, lay a series of doubts about the relationship between religion and society. The intellectual engagement between those who saw true religion as intimately bound with a communal and visible institution, and those who argued that the only true expression of belief was internal and individual, was fought out in many *fora*: the parish, Parliament, the world of print culture, the Court, the public spaces of coffee-houses and salons. That this war of ideas took place signified a changing culture of public religious expression. After the 1650s the problem of government became more complicated simply because different groups of people were 'believing' in different ways. The public claim to represent the authority of 'true religion' became a badge of political identity rather than an unconscious aspect of lived religious meaning.[47]

[1] See, Tim Harris, 'The legacy of the English Civil War: rethinking the revolution'. The European Legacy, 5 (2000), 501-14.

[2] M. A. Goldie 'The Hilton gang and the purge of London in the 1680s' in H. Nenner (ed) Politics and the political imagination in later Stuart Britain (Woodbridge, 1998) 43-73. M.A. Goldie, 'The political thought of the Anglican revolution'. in R. Beddard, (ed.) The Revolutions of 1688 (Oxford, 1991), 102-36. M.A. Goldie, 'The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England'. in O.P. Grell, J.I. Israel, N. Tyacke, (eds), From Persecution to Toleration : The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England (Oxford, 1991) 331-68.

[3] See J. Spurr The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689. (Yale, 1991); idem 'Schism and the Restoration church'. Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 41 (1990), 408-24.

[4] See W. Lamont's still fundamentally important Godly Rule (1969).

[5] 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) p. 43-73.

[6] See J.A.I. Champion 'Willing to suffer: law and religious conscience in seventeenth century England' in J. McLaren, H. Coward (eds) Religious conscience, the state and the law (New York, 1999) 13-28.

[7] A case study of contestation can be seen in J.A.I. Champion, L. McNulty 'Making orthodoxy in late Restoration England: the trials of Edmund Hickeringill' in M.J. Braddick, J. Walter (eds) Negotiating power in early modern society (Cambridge, 2001) 227-248, 302-305.

[8] For a discussion of the historical arguments see, J.A.I. Champion The pillars of priestcraft shaken(Cambridge, 1992) esp. chap. 3 'Arimathea to Cranmer' 53-98.

[9] Tim Harris Politics under the later Stuarts (1993); idem 'Was the Tory reaction popular?: attitudes of Londoners towards the persecution of dissent, 1681-1686'. London Journal, 13 (1987-8), 106-20.

[10] A.J. Fletcher, 'The enforcement of the Conventicle Acts 1664-1679'. in W.J. Sheils, (ed), Persecution and Toleration (Studies in Church History, 21) (Oxford, 1984), 235-46.

[11] T. Ellwood A discourse concerning riots (1683). 3, 11-12, 13-14.

[12] R.L. Greaves 'Conventicles, Sedition, and the Toleration Act of 1689'. Eighteenth Century Life, 12 (1988), 1-14; idem 'Seditious sectaries or "sober and useful inhabitants"?: Changing conceptions of the Quakers in early modern Britain'. Albion 33 (2001) 24-50. There are around 80 works devoted to the debate, c.1664-1684.

[13] J. Norris A discourse concerning the pretended religious assembling in private conventicles (1685) 10-11.

[14] Norris A discourse 10, 38, 51, 54.

[15] Norris A discourse 62-65, 72-73.

[16] Norris A discourse 77-79, 83.

[17] Norris A discourse 98, 109-114, 122-123, 131.

[18] Norris A discourse 158-159, 198, 238-239.

[19] Norris A discourse 240, 249-250, 259, 306.

[20] See 'The Diary of Isaac Archer, 1641-1700' in M. Storey (ed) Two East Anglian Diaries, 1641-1729 (Suffolk Record Society, 26, 1994) 'Introduction' 1-26; 48-49, 101-103, 115.

[21] 'Diary' 68.

[22] 'Diary' 71-72.

[23] 'Diary' 80-81, 82.

[24] 'Diary' 83-84, 113.

[25] 'Diary' 92, 110, 111, 113, 114.

[26] 'Diary' 89-90.

[27] 'Diary' 148.

[28] 'Diary' 25.

[29] 'Diary' 143; P. Collinson 'The English conventicle' Voluntary Religion (Studies in Church History , 23) (Oxford, 1986) 223-261, at 239-42.

[30] J.C.D Clark English Society 1688-1832 (Cambridge, 1985) 302. See P.B. Hessert 'The Bangorian Controversy' (Edinburgh University PhD, 1951); H. D. Rack ' "Christ's Kingdom not of this World": the case of Benjamin Hoadly versus William Law reconsidered' Studies in Church History 12 (1975) 275-91. The NewDNB entry by Stephen Taylor is the starting point for modern study.

[31] See N. Sykes 'Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor' in F.J.C. Hearnshaw (ed) The Social and Political Ideas of some English Thinkers of the Augustan Age (1928) 112-156 at 120.

[32] J.A.I. Champion "Le culte prive quand il est rendu dans le secret': Hobbes, Locke et les limites de la tolerence, l'atheisme et l'heterodoxie'. in Y. Charles Zarka, F. Lessay and J. Rogers (eds) Les fondements philosophiques de la tolerence volume 1, (Paris, 2002) 221-253.

[33] See J.A.I. Champion '"Religion's safe, with priestcraft is the war": Augustan anticlericalism and the legacy of the English Revolution, 1660-1720' The European Legacy 5 (2000) 547-561.

[34] 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.

[35] See P. Harvey 'The problem of social-political obligation for the Church of England in the seventeenth century' Church History 40 (1971) 156-169.

[36] Sykes 'Benjamin Hoadly', 143.

[37] Hoadly Kingdom 3-5, 6, 9-11.

[38] Synodolia (1888) volume II, 'A Representation of the lower House of Convocation'. 829, 830.

[39] Hessert 'Bangorian Controversy' 41-43, 64.

[40] Hessert 'Bangorian Controversy' 117-119.

[41] See M. Tindal The Rights of the Christian Church (1706) lxxxviii, 80, 84-85 151, 310, 370.

[42] Hoadly Kingdom 18-20.

[43] Hoadly Kingdom 24, 27.

[44] See, R. Cornwall Visible and Apostolic. The Constitution of the Church in High Church Anglican and Non-Juror Thought (Delaware, 1993) 78.

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

[46] See Pocock 'Religious freedom'.

[47] J.A.I. Champion, "To govern is to make subjects believe': anticlericalism, politics and power, c.1680-1717'. in M. Cragoe, N. Aston, (ed.), Anticlericalism in Britain, c.1500-1914 (Stroud, 2000), 42-66.