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**Holy and Peculiar People:  
Mysticks and Mystical Theology in  
England, 1605-1705**

L. P. Temple

**PhD**

**2015**

**Holy and Peculiar People:  
Mysticks and Mystical Theology in  
England, 1605-1705**

Liam Peter Temple

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of the requirements of the  
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## Abstract

This thesis addresses attitudes towards mystical theology in seventeenth-century England. While current historiography on mystical theology tends to stress its Catholic and medieval contexts, it has so far overlooked the ways in which Protestants continued to assimilate it in the early modern period. By exploring how Catholics and Protestants engaged with each other when discussing mystical theology, this thesis traces both irenic and intolerant responses to the debate. In many cases the confessional stance of the author of mystical works was seen as secondary to the spiritual benefits derived from them.

Drawing on substantial archival material as well as printed works, this thesis shows that both Catholics and Protestants claimed mystical theology as their own through references to 'mysticks' and 'mystical theology'. Tracing such references generates new insights into the role mystical theology played in the religious beliefs of a diverse range of groups including the English Benedictines, Familists, antinomians, Cambridge Platonists and Philadelphians. By exploring the beliefs of these diverse groups through a semantic approach we can use mystical theology to understand religious debates across the seventeenth century more broadly. As the mystical 'way of knowing' became associated with both Catholic and radical 'enthusiasm' by those seeking to discredit it, it is argued that the Philadelphian Society failed to survive largely due to their attempts to assimilate both Catholic and radical uses of mystical theology into their beliefs.

This thesis rejects attempts to define or label a form of 'mysticism' in the period as subjective, preferring instead to understand exactly what 'mystical theology' and 'mysticks' meant to contemporaries. By showing that the identification of authors as 'mysticks' for the first time in the English language had its origins in the seventeenth century within diverse contexts, it also questions the usefulness of some twenty-first century labels.

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*'The purpose of life is to be defeated by greater and greater things'*  
- Rainer Maria Rilke

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 21/09/2015.

**I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 81,866 words.**

**Name:** Liam Peter Temple

**Signature:**

**Date:** 01/10/2015



### **A Note on Citation**

All quotations from and citations of contemporary manuscript and printed works retain original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, with the exception that 'i' is transposed to 'j', and 'u' to 'v' where necessary. Contractions have been silently expanded. Where pages in printed primary sources are unpaginated or misprinted, they have been referenced as the page numbers should have been with a note to signify this. Where no page number is available to cite an approximate location within the text has been provided in the footnote.

All biblical references are to the Authorized King James Version.

‘*God* is no Regarder of *persons*, but that whosoever truly fears him, and seeks to do his Will in any Tribe, Profession, or Religion, is accepted by him: and that out of all the Tribes, Professions, and Religions that are at this Day over the whole World, he will gather to himself an Holy and Peculiar People, to be as the first Fruits of the Kingdom of his SON.’

Francis Lee, ‘The Preface of the Publisher’, in Jane Lead, *The wars of David, and the peaceable reign of Solomon* (London, 1700), sig. [A]

## Introduction

Misunderstanding assumes that 'assimilating' necessarily means 'becoming similar to' what one absorbs, and not 'making something similar' to what one is, making it one's own, appropriating or reappropriating it. Between these two possible meanings, a choice must be made, and first of all on the basis of the story whose horizon has to be outlined.<sup>1</sup>

The theoretical insights of French Jesuit Michel de Certeau may seem like an unusual place to begin a study of mystical theology in seventeenth-century England. When discussing consumerism and the claims of the media to be informing (that is, to 'give form' to) social practices, Certeau highlights this as a myth based on the Enlightenment ideology that books were capable of reforming society. Rather than subscribing to this theory of passive consumption, Certeau prefers a form of 'reading as poaching' where one assimilates existing literature into a new form more suitable to the individual, rather than adapting oneself to become similar to it. When reading a book the individual poaches elements suitable to their own temperament, making sense of it within their own ideological framework and cultural situation.

This study takes Certeau's claim as a central theoretical tenet, arguing that individuals and religious groups in the seventeenth century looked to works of mystical theology not as something to be replicated entirely, but rather as sources of inspiration. Augustine Baker, the Benedictine monk on whom so much of this thesis pivots, advised the nuns of Cambrai not to subscribe to one approach to mystical theology, but rather 'be ready to leave or change them when you are invited by God to another, or that your spirit seems to relish or require another'.<sup>2</sup> Works concerning mystical theology were not seen as accounts outlining the definitive pathway to God, but rather as guides to assist the individual in their own internal struggles. They were to be used for inspiration more than instruction; to be poached rather than prescribed. If God was ineffable and beyond all words, then every account was only a pale shadow of true mystical experience and limited by the deficiencies of human language. They were not meant to be verbatim accounts, but rather the expression of one individual's attempts to describe the indescribable. The advent of printing would also have encouraged this. Works of mystical theology were no longer concealed in the manuscripts of the religious orders, and like other devotional works could be bought relatively cheaply in printed editions. Buying books was a normal part of life by the mid-seventeenth century in England, and as a result this thesis is partly concerned with how

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<sup>1</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* trans. Steven Rendall (London: University of California Press, 1984), p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Directions for Contemplation: Book D* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1999), p. 33.

works of mystical theology were received and adapted by a much larger audience in light of this profound cultural shift.<sup>3</sup>

The opening quote of Certeau's also highlights how the two different definitions of assimilation can result in different narratives. This is especially true of mystical theology, in which the two differing narratives can be labelled the 'perennial' and 'historical' approaches. The perennial approach has argued that through accounts of mystical theology the individual is assimilated to become like those who had gone before; that they largely all had the same experience regardless of their external situation. The historical approach argues that the individual adapts mystical theology to their time and place, changing it in subtle ways to suit their own historical context. The perennial view finds its best expression in the writings of Evelyn Underhill. Her *Mysticism* (1911) is rightly praised as a monumental study, but has questionable applications to the historian of mystical theology. In it she argued:

The giving of merely historical information is no part of the present plan [...] since mysticism avowedly deals with the individual not as he stands in relation to the civilisation of his time, but as he stands in relation to truths that are timeless. All mystics, said Saint-Martin, speak the same language and come from the same country. As against that fact, the place which they happen to occupy in the kingdom of this world matters little.<sup>4</sup>

The ahistorical nature of her study of mystical theology is unashamedly bold from the preface onwards, in which she admits history is useful in understanding these writers only 'to distinguish the original contributions of each individual from the mass of speculation and statement which he inherits'.<sup>5</sup> This creates an underlying tension in Underhill's study, for the appendix of her work goes to great lengths to link her subjects together historically, but only to show that each was adding to 'an enriched tradition of the transcendental life'.<sup>6</sup>

By the late 1970s criticism of this approach began to emerge in force as mystical theology garnered substantial scholarly attention. It was now the aim of scholars to return writers of mystical theology to 'the conditioning webs of history, culture, and language' by rejecting the concept that mystical theology contained timeless or perennial forms of

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<sup>3</sup> Euan Cameron, 'The Power of the Word: Renaissance and Reformation', in Euan Cameron (ed.), *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 63-101, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (Oxford: Newworld Publications, 1993), p. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 453. It is still by far one of the most useful introductory accounts to the study of mystical theology.

wisdom.<sup>7</sup> One of the greatest critics of this perennial approach was Steven T. Katz who rejected the concept on the epistemological premise that:

There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences. Neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated. That is, to say, all experience is processed through, organized by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways. The notion of unmediated experience seems, if not self-contradictory, at best empty.<sup>8</sup>

The experiences recalled in works of mystical theology were not somehow separated from the context of the writer, as Underhill had argued.<sup>9</sup> Each writer was influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of the culture and ideology from which they emerged. Wayne Proudfoot reinforced this by rejecting the attempts by scholars such as William James and Underhill to search for a ‘mystical core’ of belief that all ‘mystics’ shared.<sup>10</sup> He argued that:

The logic that governs the concepts by which people interpret their experiences in different traditions shapes those experiences. Any attempt to differentiate a core from its interpretations, then, results in the loss of the very experience one is trying to analyse. The interpretations are themselves constitutive of the experiences, [...] the rules that govern the practice and goals of mystics in particular religious traditions condition the experiences that are available to them.<sup>11</sup>

This study draws on this literature by advancing an understanding of the history of mystical theology in which each writer assimilates previous works into their own interpretative framework. In doing so it approaches mystical theology through a historical analysis, rather than a perennial approach.<sup>12</sup> It posits that the most profitable way to understand the influence of mystical theology in seventeenth-century England is to explore the ways in which it was adapted to suit the needs of a variety of groups. Understanding that works of mystical

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<sup>7</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, ‘The Making of Modern “Mysticism”’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (2003), pp. 273–302, p. 274.

<sup>8</sup> Steven T. Katz, ‘Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism’, in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 22-74, p. 26. See also Hans H. Penner, ‘The Mystical Illusion’, in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 89–116.

<sup>9</sup> This argument has taken many forms and is not just limited to Underhill, see Katz, ‘Language’ for an overview. Other examples include R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1960); idem., *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); W. T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960); idem., *Mysticism and Philosophy* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co, 1960); Ninian Smart, *Reasons and Faiths* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); idem., ‘Interpretation and Mystical Experience’, *Religious Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1965), pp. 75-87.

<sup>10</sup> See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> For the re-integration of ‘religious ideas’ into historical discourse see John Coffey and Alister Chapman, ‘Introduction: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion’, in Alister Chapman, John Coffey and Brad S. Gregory (eds.), *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 1-23.

theology were used to reinforce a religious position, rather than replace it, is essential. To return to Certeau's opening quote, the narrative of this study is one which understands the assimilation of mystical theology as a process whereby the individual poached whatever was suitable to their existing religious position, often disregarding any confessional differences they had with the original author. They did not become similar to previous works, but rather made these works similar to their existing beliefs. The history of mystical theology in seventeenth-century England is one of adaption and appropriation.

### **Mysticks and Mysticism**

'Mysticism' is a term which is consciously avoided in this study.<sup>13</sup> Rather than attempting to define a 'mysticism' and apply this retrospectively onto seventeenth-century writers, the preferred methodology is to work within the confines of the language of the period.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Several substantial attempts to define 'mysticism' have emerged. The most influential has been Bernard McGinn's three-fold understanding of mysticism as a part or element of religion, a process or way of life, and an attempt to express a direct consciousness of the presence of God. For McGinn the mystical element of Christianity 'is part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God'. Yet he admits that 'no mystics (at least before the present century) believed in or practiced "mysticism"', Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), pp. xvi-xvii. He traces the major developments in the modern study of mysticism in the appendix of *The Foundations of Mysticism*, pp. 265-343. For a criticism of this definition see Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 11. See also Louise Nelstrop with Kevin Magill and Bradley B. Onishi, *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), esp. Introduction and Conclusion.

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Apetrei has recently attempted to define 'mysticism' in seventeenth-century Britain. Her definition is one which is entangled with visionary radicalism, where 'mystics of the British Isles' advocated a new spiritual dispensation. Of all the authors she labels as mystics, only Jane Lead and Jakob Boehme were actually understood as such by the end of the seventeenth century, and her definition of 'mysticism' has little common ground with the prevalent seventeenth-century definition of 'mystical theology', see her 'Prophecy and Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century Britain', in Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (eds.), *Exploring Lost Dimensions in Christian Mysticism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 197- 216. Other attempts at defining 'mystics' and 'mysticism' in the period include J.H. Overton, *William Law: Nonjuror and Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881); William Ralph Inge, *Studies of English Mystics* (London: John Murray, 1906); W.K. Fleming, *Mysticism in Christianity* (London: Robert Scott, 1913), chs. 5-8; Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913); idem., 'William Law and the Mystics', in A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (eds.), *The Cambridge History of English Literature Volume IX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), pp. 341-65; Margaret Lewis Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914); Elbert N.S. Thompson, 'Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century English Literature', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1921), pp. 170-231; Geraldine E. Hodgson, *English Mystics* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1922); Joseph Burns Collins, *Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1940); Catherine F. Smith 'Mysticism and Feminism: Jakob Boehme and Jane Lead', in D. Hiller and R. Sheets (eds.), *Women and Men: The Consequences of Power* (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, 1977), pp. 398-408; idem., 'Jane Lead: the Feminist Mind and Art of a Seventeenth-Century Protestant Mystic', in Rosemary Ruether & Eleanor McLaughlin (eds.), *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp. 183-204; idem., 'Jane Lead: Mysticism and the Woman Cloathed in the Sun', in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (eds.), *Shakespeare's Sisters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 3-18; Michael Martin, *Literature and the Encounter with God in Post-Reformation England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), ch.

‘Mysticism’ as a term did not exist until the eighteenth century, when it was deployed to further the Enlightenment critique of fanaticism and enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup> It was used to signify the extravagant, deluded, and fantastical religious experiences of sects among all branches of Christianity, which served as a perfect contrast to the rational, genteel and ‘acceptable’ religion its critics promoted. As Leigh Eric Schmidt notes, it became the ‘excremental waste in the making of an enlightened, reasonable religion’ in a process which ‘interlaced mysticism and enthusiasm and increasingly demoted mystical theology from the center of learned discussion’.<sup>16</sup> Since then it has taken on many conflicting meanings. Underhill’s understanding of it as otherworldly perennial Christian wisdom was itself at odds with the most prevalent definition of ‘mysticism’ when she wrote her work, that of William James. The word has a complex past and history, and it is unlikely that scholars will ever agree on a true definition. As Andrew Louth has argued, the word is now:

Freighted with meanings that affect its present-day use, not least because this history, and these meanings, are often unknown to those who use the term- and freighted with meanings, not simply in a lexical sense, but freighted with claims to a certain authority, made in particular times and particular contexts, claims that do not simply slip away when the times and contexts recede from conscious memory.<sup>17</sup>

Hans H. Penner was less forgiving in his condemnation of ‘mysticism’ as ‘an illusion, unreal, a false category which has distorted an important aspect of religion’.<sup>18</sup> The subjective nature of the term often brings more confusion than clarity to the historical study of religion. In *Puritan Devotion* (1957), Gordon S. Wakefield grappled with the question whether or not there was ‘a Puritan mysticism’. He answered either in the positive or negative, depending on which definition of ‘mysticism’ he adhered to at any one time. Following Rufus M. Jones, ‘it might just be possible to count Puritans as mystics’, but following Friedrich Heiler’s definition, ‘Puritans are categorically outside the company of mystics’.<sup>19</sup> The term has become so subjective, deployed to mean so many different things in contemporary literature, that its usefulness has to be seriously questioned. In order to discourage further

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4. See also Sarah Apetrei, ‘Mysticism and Feminism in Seventeenth-Century England’, *The Way*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2007), pp. 48–69.

<sup>15</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, ‘The Making of “Mysticism” in the Anglo-American World: From Henry Coventry to William James’, in Julia A. Lamm (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism* (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), pp. 452–72, p. 454. Schmidt assumes that ‘mystic’ was also not in existence in the seventeenth century, but as this thesis shows, references were plentiful.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Deny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 203.

<sup>18</sup> Hans. H Penner, ‘The Mystical Illusion’, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion: Its Place in the Development of Christian Piety* (London, Epworth Press, 1957), p. 102. This is despite Francis Rous directly stating that he wished his work to be counted among those of mystical theology, showing how applying modern terms to seventeenth century writers can distort our understanding of them. See Chapter 2 below.

abuse of the phrase, this study instead focuses on the term ‘mystical theology’ and traces references to ‘mysticks’, both phrases which emerged into wider usage in the English language in the seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup> Tracing these references has formed the basis of this study. The aim has been to illuminate the specific historical context of mystical theology in the seventeenth century, and to construct an analysis using terms which would have been ‘understood by those who wrote and lived them’.<sup>21</sup> In doing this we can understand exactly how the term ‘mysticism’ was developed in the eighteenth century as a direct result of debates concerning mystical theology and enthusiasm in the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout this study the term ‘mystick’ is used, rather than the more modern spelling of ‘mystic’. This serves a purpose greater than stylistic accuracy. Modern historiography has developed an almost lackadaisical trend for labelling writers as ‘mystics’. Would the writer they are labelling as such ever have understood the term? Would they ever have identified with it? Can we have serious academic discussion over questions such as ‘was Hildegard of Bingen a mystic?’ when at the time the substantive noun did not exist?<sup>23</sup> Even when the term did exist in the seventeenth century, some questions remain unanswerable. For instance, the radical Quaker James Nayler has been labelled a mystic, despite never having been known as such at the time. Can one ‘usefully compare Nayler’s mysticism with that of fourteenth-century writers like Julian of Norwich?’ we are asked, ‘is it possible to compare *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Nayler’s entry into Bristol in 1656 without being seriously historically reductive?’<sup>24</sup> A more pressing question would be why

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<sup>20</sup> I do not contend to argue, as Ursula King has, that ‘mysticism is modern but describes for us what the ancients understood by this “mystical theology”’. As this chapter shows, ancient writers had a very different understanding of what mystical theology was when compared with early modern writers, never mind modern ones. See her *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies throughout the Ages* (Mahwah: HiddenSpring, 2001), pp. 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> Amy Hollywood, ‘Introduction’, in Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-33, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> This is done in light of Quentin Skinner’s criticism of only studying words and ignoring larger concepts formulating behind them. Although ‘mysticism’ as a term did not exist, ‘mysticks’ and ‘mystical theology’ allow us to trace the slow development of the concept into language; see Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.159, as well as chs. 9 and 10 more generally. Skinner was critiquing the use of a ‘word only’ approach as exemplified in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>23</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), p. 336. Similar questions have been asked of Augustine of Hippo, see Cuthbert Butler, *Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Dutton, 1923), p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Betteridge, ‘Vernacular Theology’, in Brian Cummings and James Simpson (eds.), *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 188-205, p. 189. Betteridge also attempts to compare Julian of Norwich and George Herbert, a seventeenth century Welsh born Church of England divine. Despite admitting they were ‘both Christian writers concerned with questions of faith and salvation’, he insists on a deeper link concerning their shared ‘pessimism towards human language articulated in works like *The Cloud*’ (p. 196). Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith have supported Betteridge’s claim that ‘Quaker language might



this needs to be considered, as none of these authors would have understood the term ‘mysticism’ or have been labelled as mystics. W.T. Stace once provocatively argued that ‘there are no Protestant mystics’ - a claim which prompted Anne Fremantle to produce *The Protestant Mystics* (1964), a work which ‘set out to prove there were’.<sup>25</sup> But the reader is left confused over who exactly might qualify as a ‘mystic’, or indeed if both Stace and Fremantle understood and defined the term in the same way. One author might see a ‘mystic’ where another sees none. Stace found none to fit his definition, Fremantle found over sixty to fit hers. Just as scholars now construct canons of ‘mystics’ that are qualified in some way or another, we need to be aware that seventeenth-century writers also constructed their own canons of mysticks and that this was prone to the same problems. Some authors considered mysticks by one group would not be considered as such by another.<sup>26</sup> This is what Schmidt described in his work on the American Enlightenment as the ‘continuing shifts in who was utilized by whom to constitute the category of mystical writers’, complementing the argument of Grace M. Jantzen that ‘who counts as a mystic is a social construction’.<sup>27</sup> This thesis thus utilizes the spelling of ‘mystick’ to highlight that the labelling of a writer as such was done at the time, and is not a subjective label applied retrospectively.

Attempting an historical account which is sensitive to the meaning of words has a precedent in the existing historiography. As Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington have argued in their analysis of the semantics of ‘community’ in early modern England, we should be aware that contemporary meanings of words are not the same as they were in the past, and that the ‘previous meanings of words were often as diverse, contested and contingent on the complex dynamics of particular circumstance’.<sup>28</sup> Awareness of semantics was at the heart of Withington’s own *Society in Early Modern England* (2010), which traced the meanings of words such as ‘modern’, ‘society’ and ‘commonwealth’.<sup>29</sup> This is part of a

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automatically be classified as mysticism’, despite not explaining exactly who would have been classifying it as such (given the term didn’t exist) in their ‘Introduction’, in Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith (eds.), *Mysticism and Reform 1400-1750* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), pp. 1-28, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> Anne Fremantle (ed.), *The Protestant Mystics* (London: Weidenfels & Nicholson, 1964), p. vii.

<sup>26</sup> An example of this modern scholarly canon building can be found in King, *Christian Mystics*; Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: The Modern Library, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 11; Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> Phil Withington and Alexandra Shepard, ‘Introduction: communities in early modern England’, in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (eds.), *Communities in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1-17. p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); idem., ‘The Semantics of “Peace” in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 23 (2013), pp 127-53. Further work involving Withington has spawned several similar studies, see Early Modern Research Group, ‘Towards a

wider undertaking by social historians to understand changes over time through vocabularies and semantics.<sup>30</sup> Other ground-breaking work includes Susie I. Tucker's exploration of the semantics of 'enthusiasm', in which she observes the evolution of the word from a term of criticism used to smear those that believed in prophecy or divine revelation in the seventeenth century, to a broader meaning of an irrational type of religious practice in the eighteenth century, and finally in the nineteenth century to a word which described someone who expressed too much pride, clamour or excitement.<sup>31</sup> Her work inspired others to discuss a language or rhetoric of enthusiasm, and trace how this was deployed as criticism.<sup>32</sup>

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Social and Cultural History of Keywords and Concepts by the Early Modern Research Group', *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2010), pp. 427-48; idem., 'Commonwealth: The Social, Cultural and Conceptual Contexts of an Early Modern Keyword', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (2011) pp. 659-87. I am grateful to Professor Withington for his encouraging advice after his paper at Northumbria in January 2013.

<sup>30</sup> See for example, David Cressy, 'Describing the social order of Elizabethan and Stuart England', *Literature and History*, Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 29-44; Craig Muldrew, 'Interpreting the Market: the Ethics of Credit and Community Relations in Early Modern England', *Social History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1993), pp. 163-83; Keith Wrightson, 'The Social order of Early Modern England: Three Approaches', in Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith and Keith Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 177-202; idem., 'Estates, degrees, and sorts: changing perceptions of society in Tudor and Stuart England', in Penelope J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford: Blackwell 1991), pp. 30-52; idem., 'Sorts of People in Tudor and Stuart England', in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People. Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550- 1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 28-51; Naomi Tadmor 'The Concept of the Household Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, Vol. 151 (1996), pp. 110-40; Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Other important studies of the meaning of words include Christopher Hill, "'Reason'" and "'Reasonableness'" in Seventeenth-Century England', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1969), pp. 235-52; Thomas H. Clancy, 'Papist-Protestant-Puritan: English Religious Taxonomy 1565-1665', *Recusant History*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1975/6), pp. 227-53; Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>31</sup> Susie I. Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 17, 26-38. Tucker's work also contradicted the prevailing orthodox Catholic scholarship of R.A. Knox, see his *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950). For astute criticism of Knox and succinct summaries of older historiographical debates concerning the concept of 'enthusiasm' see Michael Heyd, 'The Reaction to Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth Century: Towards an Integrative Approach', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1981), pp. 258-80.

<sup>32</sup> See for example J.G.A. Pocock, 'Edmund Burke and the Redefinition of Enthusiasm', in François Furet and Mona Ozouf (eds.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture, Volume 3: The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789-1848* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989), pp. 19-43; Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jan Goldstein, 'Enthusiasm or Imagination? Eighteenth-Century Smear Words in Comparative National Context', in Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa (eds.), *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1998), pp. 29-49; Alasdair Raffe, *The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in Scotland, 1660-1714* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), ch. 5.

Another example is the evolution of the concept of ‘religious liberty’ in the mid-seventeenth century as explored by Blair Worden.<sup>33</sup>

Although this entire study is devoted to exploring the meaning of mysticks and mystical theology, it is useful to set the scene by outlining some of their main uses. The phrase ‘mystic’ had origins in pre-Christian mystery religions, and this understanding of the word to mean ‘secret’ or ‘mysterious’ was carried over from the Greek language and applied to the Bible. Its main application by the early Church Fathers was in the context of scriptural exegesis, and denoted the allegorical or ‘hidden’ meaning of Scripture. The most mysterious doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the divinity of Christ or the Eucharist, were also understood to have a ‘mystical’ sense.<sup>34</sup> Clement of Alexandria, for example, introduced the phrases ‘mystical’ and ‘mystically’, using them over fifty times to describe everything from Christ, his teachings, and the deeper understanding of Scripture; while Macarius the Great introduced the concept of ‘mystical union’ with God.<sup>35</sup> The term *theologia mystica* was coined in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, who spoke of a process of purification (*catharsis*) which allowed the individual to enter into contemplation (*theōria*) and obtain a union with God (*henosis*). In the early Church the hidden or secret depths of the Bible and the sacraments were understood via mystical contemplation and even a mystical union with God through Christ. They laid less importance on their own experiences of the presence of God, and concerned themselves with the ‘mystical reality of Christ in the church’. Mystical theology was therefore understood to be knowledge that dealt with the mystery of God.<sup>36</sup> Yet this changed over time, as Amy Hollywood points out:

Increasingly we find the term mystical used to name not only Christ and Christ’s teaching, which are the hidden truth of scripture, and the Eucharist (in which Christ is hidden under the visible bread and wine), but also stages of contemplation (in Greek, *theoria* and in Latin, *contemplatio*) leading to the vision of God, the vision of God itself, union with God (Greek, *henosis* and Latin, *unitas*), and theology (*theologia*, a Greek term taken over directly into Latin).<sup>37</sup>

Many in seventeenth-century England would have understood such terms, although they had lost their specific reference to Scripture and referred to mysteries more widely. ‘Misticall’ was defined as ‘hidden’ in Henry Hexham’s *A copious English and Netherduytch dictionarie* (1647); as ‘mysterious, secret, hidden’ in Edward Philips’s *The new world of English words*

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<sup>33</sup> Blair Worden, *God's Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 63- 90.

<sup>34</sup> Louis Bouyer, ‘Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word’, in Richard Woods (ed.), *Understanding Mysticism* (New York: Image Books, 1980), pp. 42- 55. The irony is, of course, that Bouyer’s essay never touches on the history of the word ‘mysticism’ specifically as his analysis ends in the sixth century, long before the phrase existed.

<sup>35</sup> McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, pp. 102, 144.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 184.

<sup>37</sup> Hollywood, ‘Introduction’, p. 5-6.

(1658); and as ‘mysterious, secret, obscure’ in Elisha Coles’s *An English dictionary* (1677).<sup>38</sup> The word ‘mystical’ appeared to mean both ‘secret’ and ‘sacred’ interchangeably, as William Laud referenced the ‘*Mysticall and Spirituall Mother, the Church*’ around the same time that Francis Herring wrote of the ‘mystick-riddle’ found in the letter which foiled the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>39</sup> Oftentimes ‘mystical’ referred to symbols or hidden knowledge, an inheritance from the Neoplatonists who had passed on the concept that hieroglyphs were an esoteric system of sacred symbols that revealed divine knowledge to Renaissance scholars.<sup>40</sup> Thus one author would describe the Egyptians as having all their ‘books in Hieroglyphicks bound’ which were ‘mistick writing’.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia* (1656) described mystical as ‘secret, hidden, sacred’, but more significantly had a separate entry for mystical theology. Blount’s definition was that:

*Mystical Theology*, is nothing else in general but certain Rules, by the practise whereof, a vertuous Christian may attain to a nearer, a more familiar, and beyond all expression comfortable conversation with God, by arriving unto, not onely a belief, but also an experimental knowledge, and perception of his divine presence, after an unexpressible manner in the soul, &c.<sup>42</sup>

This was not a definition of Blount’s own making and was taken directly from the Benedictine Serenus Cressy’s *Exomologesis* (1647).<sup>43</sup> Cressy, a convert to Catholicism, was central to the understanding of mystical theology in England. He was, as is argued later in

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<sup>38</sup>Henry Hexham, *A copious English and Netherduytch dictionarie* (Rotterdam, 1647) sig. Q4<sup>r</sup>; Edward Philips, *The new world of English words* (London, 1658), sig. Dd2<sup>r</sup>; Elisha Coles, *An English dictionary explaining the difficult terms* (London, 1676), sig. Bb4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>39</sup>William Laud, *A relation of the conference betweene William Lawd, then, Lrd. Bishop of St. Davids; now, Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury: and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite by the command of King James of ever blessed memorie*. (London, 1639), p. 257; Francis Herring, *November the 5. 1605. The quintessence of cruelty, or, master-peice of treachery, the Popish powder-plot, invented by hellish-malice, prevented by heavenly-mercy* (London, 1641), pp. 33-8.

<sup>40</sup>Thomas C. Singer, ‘Hieroglyphs, Real Characters, and the Idea of Natural Language in English Seventeenth-Century Thought’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1989), pp. 49-70, p. 51. See also Brian A. Curran, “‘De Sacrarum Litterarum Aegyptiorum Interpretatione.’” Reticence And Hubris In Hieroglyphic Studies Of The Renaissance: Pierio Valeriano And Annus Of Viterbo’, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, Vol. 43/44 (1998/1999), pp. 139-82.

<sup>41</sup>Sir George Wharton, *Grand Pluto’s progresse through Great Britaine, and Ireland. Being a diarie, or exact journal of all his observations during the time of his walking to and fro in the said kingdoms* (London, 1647), p. 10.

<sup>42</sup>Thomas Blount, *Glossographia: or A dictionary, interpreting all such hard words, whether Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, Teutonick, Belgick, British or Saxon; as are now used in our refined English tongue. Also the terms of divinity, law, physick, mathematicks, heraldry, anatomy, war, musick, architecture; and of several other arts and sciences explicated. With etymologies, definitions, and historical observations on the same. Very useful for all such as desire to understand what they read* (London, 1656), sig. Cc7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>43</sup>Serenus Cressy, *Exomologesis: or, A faithfull narration of the occasion and motives of the conversion unto Catholique unity of Hugh-Paulin de Cressy* (Paris, 1647), p. 635.

this thesis, the ‘public face’ of mystical theology in the seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> These ‘certain Rules’ were the abnegation of the senses, rejection of the outer world and its temptations, and the resignation of the self to the will of God. Adhering to these rules resulted in ‘experimental knowledge’ and an experience of God beyond expression. Yet this definition had little real overlap with the early Christian concept of *theologia mystica*, which emphasized mystical theology as a form of knowledge to be used to understand the deepest mysteries of the Church. It was now more of a personal and intimate experience of the presence of God, one which often had little to say on doctrine or theology in general, focusing on the ‘constitution of a specific knowledge of the world and the self’.<sup>45</sup>

Part of this transformation can be explained by the emerging definition of mysticks in the seventeenth century. As Michel de Certeau has noted, before the sixteenth century anyone practicing mystical theology was much more likely to be known as a ‘contemplative’ or ‘spiritualist’ than a ‘mystic’.<sup>46</sup> He traces the origins of the phrase ‘mystic’ to the progressive isolation of a mystical ‘science’ as a specific way of knowing. As saints began to be respected more for their ‘unknown language’ than their miracles, the ‘science of the saints’ began to take shape. ‘Contemplatives’ were transformed into the doctors of that science, as figures such as Teresa of Avila became known as ‘mystic doctors’. Pseudo-Dionysius became the ‘seal of quality’ whereby ‘to be authorized, one had to resemble him’, becoming the ‘eponymous hero of an entire literature’.<sup>47</sup> Certeau describes how:

In attempting to resemble him, other ‘mystical theologies’ were born, with other ‘doctors and professors of mystical theology’, ‘princes of the profound and secret theology of Christians’. His authority both circumscribed and permitted the formation of a discipline, furnishing a linguistic as well as a theoretical referent [...] Mystical independence, already marked by a relation to the Dionysian corpus, or by the predicates of an ‘extraordinary’, ‘experimental’, ‘affective’, ‘practical’ doctrine, in fact, soon did become legitimate. At the juncture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ‘mystic theologian’ became a ‘mystic’.<sup>48</sup>

This development was a consequence of the divorce of dogmatic and mystical theology, or theology and spirituality, which were not separated in early Christianity by the Church

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 4 below.

<sup>45</sup> Niklaus Largier, ‘Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience’, *Representations*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (2009), pp. 37-60, p. 51.

<sup>46</sup> Wolfgang Riehle gives the example of Richard Rolle, who was known as a ‘contemplatif of sentence’. See his *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. xiv.

<sup>47</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Mystical Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 94-6; 101-103. See also William L. Portier & C. J. T. Talar, ‘The Mystical Element of the Modernist Crisis’, in C. J. T. Talar (ed.), *Modernists & Mystics* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), pp. 1-22.

<sup>48</sup> Certeau, *The Mystical Fable*, pp. 103-4, 107.

Fathers.<sup>49</sup> ‘Spirituality’ in its early Christian usage was not something a person had, but was rather a pattern of growth which took place within a wider participation in the Christian community; it was mutual, communal, practical and orientated towards the Church. Yet by the twelfth century *spiritualitas* began to be understood as a state of inner purity and perfection, and by the sixteenth century was understood to deal entirely with the interior state of the soul. Using the language of Pseudo-Dionysius, the knowledge gained from mystical theology now solely impacted on the soul’s process of sanctification, having no real bearing on the understanding of doctrine or a wider use for the Christian community. The ‘mystical dimension’ of spirituality, which early writers had seen as the foundation of theology, grew ever more estranged from it. The communal and theological implications of contemplation, which was the harmony of spirituality and theology, weakened over time, and began to be seen as a devotional rather than academic method of understanding. By the end of the medieval period, scholasticism and spirituality had become almost entirely separate discourses, and thus spirituality was defined as the concern of the individual and divorced from mainstream ecclesial life.<sup>50</sup> Denys Turner has argued that this split was witnessed by the fifteenth-century writer Denys the Carthusian, who saw ‘mysticism’ and ‘theology’ stand visibly in opposition to each other. The mystical theology of Denys subsequently had the character of a ‘last stand’ about it, as he could ‘perceive rather clearly what was happening’ in this split, but at the same time was ‘too late to prevent it, too early to see that preventing it was no longer possible’.<sup>51</sup>

This study takes Certeau’s hypothesis, based on French examples, and expands it to England. It outlines how mysticks emerged in seventeenth-century England as writers who promoted a certain ‘way of knowing’ which was the opposite of scholastic or ‘worldly’ knowledge. For Benedictines, Puritans, antinomians and Philadelphians, mystical theology was used to claim access to hidden truths as a way of legitimising themselves. For those defending the Church of England, such as Edward Stillingfleet, or attacking sectarian enthusiasm, in the case of Meric Casaubon, mystical theology, mysticks and the mystical ‘way of knowing’ were all dangerous signs of the threat such claims to authority had to the established order.<sup>52</sup> This thesis thus begins with Certeau’s theory on the emerging canon of

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<sup>49</sup> Andrew Louth has revealed this to be so in his *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*.

<sup>50</sup> This understanding of the split between mystical theology and scholastic theology and the changing nature of ‘spirituality’ is taken from chapters 1 and 2 of Mark A. McIntosh’s excellent study, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden: Blackwell, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Turner, *The Darkness of God*, pp. 224-5. William Harmless traces this split further back into the writings of Jean Gerson, see his *Mystics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ch. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Parallels can be drawn with the Roman Inquisition and its worries over the mystical experiences of Miguel de Molinos, see Patricia Manning, *Voicing Dissent in Seventeenth-century Spain: Inquisition, Social Criticism and Theology in the Case of El Criticón* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) ch. 1. For mysticism as dissent see Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protestant in the*

mysticks, and ends with Schmidt's observations that the emergence of the term 'mysticism' was born out of the association of mystical theology with enthusiasm and sectarianism in the early eighteenth century. It is the gap in between these two theories, and the narrative of the struggles across the seventeenth century in grappling with these concepts, which this thesis addresses. Beginning with the Benedictines in 1605 and ending with the Philadelphians in 1705 is a conscious effort to focus the narrative of this study into this historiographical gap. By the time of the downfall of the Philadelphian Society at the start of the eighteenth century, a canon of Christian mysticks had emerged, and the foundations for seeing 'mysticism' as Christian enthusiasm had been laid. By the end of the seventeenth century mysticks in England were both 'holy and peculiar people', depending on who assessed them.

### **Medieval English Mystics and Reformation Historiography**

The need for a study of mysticks in seventeenth-century England may come as a surprise in light of a historiography which has consistently stressed the existence of a group of 'late medieval English mystics'. Not only is this grouping an artificial construct, it is also the result of partisan and confessional scholarship.<sup>53</sup> This group consisted of Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Julian of Norwich and the controversial and much maligned Margery Kempe, who together formed a 'medieval English mystical tradition'.<sup>54</sup> Much has been written of this group, which represented a form of 'medieval English mysticism' that was thriving throughout the period until around 1534, when the tradition supposedly continued within the exiled religious orders.<sup>55</sup> The focus on this group was nurtured through the conference series *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England* founded by Marion Glasscoe, and the journal *The Fourteenth-Century English Mystics Newsletter*, which became *Mystics Quarterly* and then *Journal of Medieval*

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*Sixteenth Century* (London: Yale University Press, 1973); idem., 'Mysticism, Nominalism and Dissent', in Charles Thinkaus & Heiko A. Oberman (eds), *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion: Papers from the University of Michigan Conference* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 67-92; Andrew Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), ch. 6; Frank Graziano, *Wounds of Love: The Mystical Marriage of Saint Rose of Lima* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ch. 5.

<sup>53</sup> My own recent article argues that the artificial nature of this group has damaged the study of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe by removing them from their true context, which was a transnational tradition of affective piety, and presenting them as influenced only by fellow English authors; Liam Peter Temple, 'Returning the English "mystics" to their medieval milieu: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Bridget of Sweden', *Women's Writing* (2015) [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2015.1055695>, accessed 30 September 2015]

<sup>54</sup> For a summary of the scholarly attention paid to Margery Kempe and the criticism levelled against her see Marea Mitchell, *The Book of Margery Kempe: Scholarship, Community, and Criticism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), ch. 5.

<sup>55</sup> James Simpson, '1534-1550s: texts', in Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 249- 64, p. 257. The *Companion* stops entirely in the 1550s, suggesting this as a definitive cut off point for any form of 'mysticism' in England.

*Religious Culture*.<sup>56</sup> The concept has come under heavy criticism, however, with Nicholas Watson labelling ‘medieval English mysticism’ an ‘imported, anachronistic, and, above all, essentially evaluative term’, while calling for the return of these texts to their place in a wider tradition of contemplative writing.<sup>57</sup> The anachronistic concept of their ‘Englishness’ has also been criticized by Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt, who have stressed that England in the late medieval period was ‘multicultural and multilingual’ and enjoyed close links with the Continent.<sup>58</sup> What this concept has produced is an impression that mystical theology was exiled along with the Catholic religious orders during the Reformation, and that it became the sole interest of those groups in the centuries that followed. To understand why the historiography has been shaped in this way requires a more detailed analysis of scholarly accounts of the Reformation.

Until the 1970s historical accounts of the Reformation were confined to a ‘confessional straitjacket’, with the history of Protestantism almost exclusively written by Protestants, and the history of Catholicism left to members of the Catholic religious orders.<sup>59</sup> The dominant ‘Whig-Protestant’ narrative of the Reformation was one of progress, where the laity of late medieval England grew discontented with a failing clergy and Church and happily accepted the break with Rome and the doctrines of Protestantism.<sup>60</sup> The Reformation had been the ‘midwife delivering England from the Dark Ages, papal and ecclesiastical

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<sup>56</sup> Marion Glasscoe (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980). The latest edition is E.A. Jones (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers read at Charney Manor, July 2011* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013). See also Valerie Marie Lagorio and Ritamary Bradley, *The 14<sup>th</sup>-Century English Mystics: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1981).

<sup>57</sup> Nicholas Watson, ‘Introduction’, in Fanous and Gillespie (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, pp. 1-28, p. 11. Elsewhere Watson argues that ‘The study of the English “mystics” has for long been a thing unto itself, little influenced by and scarcely influencing work on other writers’ and calls for them to be ‘fully integrated into our picture of medieval English culture’, idem., ‘The Middle English Mystics’, in David Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 539-65, p. 539. See also Denise N. Baker, ‘Julian of Norwich and the Varieties of Middle English Mystical Discourse’, in Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 53-63.

<sup>58</sup> Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt, ‘Writing a History of British Women’s Writing from 700 to 1500’, in idem., (eds.), *The History of British Women’s Writing, 700-1500*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1-30, p. 2. See Temple, ‘Returning the English “mystics” to their medieval milieu’ for a further outline of the criticism of this group, especially from feminist scholars.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew Petegree, ‘Introduction: The changing face of Reformation history’, in idem., (ed.), *The Reformation World* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1-6, p. 2. See also Rosemary O’Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London: Methuen & Co, 1986). Even now in the age of ‘postconfessionalism’ there is still concern over confessional perspectives and allegiances influencing accounts of early modern religion. See Peter Marshall, ‘(Re)defining the English Reformation’, *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 48, No. 3 (2009), pp. 564–86; Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘Protestantism in Mainland Europe: New Directions’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No.3 (2006), pp. 698-706, pp. 704–6.

<sup>60</sup> The most influential of this approach being A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964); Christopher Haigh, ‘Revisionism, the Reformation and the History of English Catholicism’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1985), pp. 394-406.



tyranny to the threshold of modernity'.<sup>61</sup> In the face of this dominant Protestant narrative of the post-Reformation period, English Catholics were seen as an alien body about which English historians were 'not required to bother'.<sup>62</sup> The confessional boundaries had severed the history of England between pre- and post-Reformation; an England which was essentially Catholic, then Protestant. Interest in mystical theology was assumed to have ceased to have either influence or place in this new 'Protestant' England. This was essentially a travesty within a much larger tragedy; English Catholics had no place in accounts of post-Reformation England, and as a result mystical theology in England was confined to a medieval and Catholic context. In light of this David Knowles, Benedictine monk and Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, wrote *The English Mystical Tradition* (1961) which sought to use the 'medieval English mystics' as proof of the strength of English Catholicism before the Reformation.<sup>63</sup> He highlighted the vitality of late medieval works of contemplation and mystical theology, but almost completely surrendered the possibility of mystical theology continuing to have influence in post-Reformation England, which was seen as the domain of Protestant scholars.<sup>64</sup>

Since the publication of *The English Mystical Tradition* in 1961, this attitude towards Catholicism and the Reformation has been significantly eroded. Until the 1970s it was 'a subfield, if not a ghetto occupied by the ancestors of those who had suffered for their faith in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', who wrote 'salvation history' or accounts which highlighted 'priest-holes and martyrs', preserving Catholic history as case studies for the canonization of these figures.<sup>65</sup> It was the seminal work of John Bossy, who built on

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<sup>61</sup> Ian Hazlett, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland: An Introduction* (London: T & T Clark Ltd, 2005), p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Caroline M. Hibbard, 'Early Stuart Catholicism: Revisions and Re-Revisions', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (1980), pp. 1-34, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961). See also idem., *The English Mystics* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1927). Knowles was also limited by demands to interpret the medieval period in ways which would not damage the reputation of the modern-day Church; Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages* (New York, Morrow, 1993), p. 290.

<sup>64</sup> The exception to the rule is the superb series of articles by T.A. Birrell published as 'English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles', *Downside Review*, Vol. 94 (1976), pp. 60-81, 99-117, 213-28. Much inspiration has been taken from this pioneering work, which was the first real attempt at something like tracing mystics in early modern England. Birrell did himself a disservice by labelling his articles a study of 'English Catholic mystics', when in reality he did not confine himself to such a group.

<sup>65</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 4. Walsham notes this was 'inward-looking and afflicted by a kind of tunnel vision' consisting of 'a vertical history which neglected the horizontal relationships between Catholics and the several varieties of Protestants alongside whom they lived in these islands' (p. 5); J.C. Aveling, 'Some Aspects of Yorkshire Catholic Recusant History, 1558-1791', in G. J. Cuming (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, IV (Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 98-121; Christopher Haigh, 'The Fall of a Church or the Rise of a Sect? Post-Reformation Catholicism in England', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1978), pp. 181-86, p. 181. Alison Shell notes that even now accounts of Catholicism are assumed to

earlier local history studies, which changed this.<sup>66</sup> Bossy himself admitted that ‘a change of perspective was a good while overdue’.<sup>67</sup> At a time when studies of the Protestant Reformation began to shift from large-scale national narratives to richer studies of specific localities, accounts of post-Reformation Catholicism in England began to develop in the opposite direction through a new desire to make Catholics visible on a larger scale.<sup>68</sup> Bossy echoed the dominant narrative of the late medieval Church as a failing institution by arguing that the post-Reformation Catholic community was ‘in most respects a new creation’ which harnessed the energies of missionary zeal from the Continent.<sup>69</sup> 1568, the date of the foundation of the Douai seminary, was ‘year zero’ in the history of post-Reformation English Catholicism; the beginning of a new strand of nonconformity within England.<sup>70</sup>

Subsequent revisionist criticism of Bossy’s narrative came from Christopher Haigh, who argued that the seminary priests and Jesuits did not have to create a new Catholicism, but rather engaged with the ‘residual religion of the interstices’ which retained its hold where Protestantism could not influence. It was a community which retained patterns of behaviour such as the mass, devotion to saints, prayers for the dead, and cycles of fast and feast, all of which had survived the Reformation.<sup>71</sup> Altars, holy water, rosary-beads, and the

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be ‘hagiographical to some degree’ in her *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558- 1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 5. See also the example given at the start of Christopher Haigh’s *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), where Haigh recounts assumptions he was a Catholic, only for one scholar to find out he was not and exclaim ‘then why does he write such things?’ (p. vii).

<sup>66</sup> See for example J. C. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1976); idem., *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York, 1558-1791* (London: Catholic Record Society, 1970). Others include R. B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969); idem., ‘Catholics and Local Office Holding in Elizabethan Sussex’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (1962), pp. 47-61; Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>67</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570- 1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Pettegree, ‘Introduction: The Changing face of Reformation history’, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, p. 11. Bossy had previously argued that Elizabethan Catholicism was ‘dominated by elements foreign’ in his ‘The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 21 (1962), pp. 39-59, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher Haigh, ‘Catholicism in Early Modern England: Bossy and beyond’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2002), pp. 481-94, p. 482. The distinction Bossy makes between ‘survivalism’ and ‘seminarism’ drew on the work of A.G. Dickens, ‘The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy in Yorkshire, 1560- 1590’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 35 (1941), pp. 157-81.

<sup>71</sup> Haigh, ‘The Fall of a Church’, p. 184. Defence of Bossy came from Patrick McGrath, ‘Elizabethan Catholicism: a Reconsideration’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1984), pp. 414- 28. McGrath agreed that there had not been a substantial break, and that ‘the seminary priests had more in common with the Catholicism of the earlier period than they had differences’ (p. 417). He disagreed with Haigh’s claims that this heritage and the older Marian priests did as much towards preserving Catholicism as seminary priests however (pp. 419, 428). Haigh had made this argument in ‘The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (1981), pp. 37-69, p. 41. Michael Questier has been critical of Haigh’s wide definition of Catholicism, which Questier describes as being more of a ‘non-Protestant sacramental’ popular culture than a politically sensitive awareness of what was actually considered Catholic at the time, see his ‘What Happened to

sign of the cross survived in many parts of the country during the early reign of Elizabeth, and many clergy made the Prayer Book services as reminiscent of the old mass as allowed.<sup>72</sup> Haigh and J.J. Scarisbrick, reinforced by the assertion of the strength of late medieval English Catholicism put forward by Eamon Duffy, rejected the dominant ‘Whig-Protestant’ narrative and argued that the Reformation was an ‘accidental by-product of Tudor politics’.<sup>73</sup>

Yet this choice between a Reformation from ‘above’ as opposed to the older argument from ‘below’ still left many questions unanswered.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Eamon Duffy’s comment that Protestantism in late-Elizabethan and Jacobean England was ‘a runaway success’, or a ‘howling success’ in the words of Diarmaid MacCulloch, suggests that the narrative was only partly being told.<sup>75</sup> As a result the ‘post-Revisionist’ emphasis has been on the ‘inculturation’ of Protestant ideas over the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in which Protestant ideas were adapted to become the religion of the masses across a ‘long Reformation’.<sup>76</sup> The shifting of the debate from why and when to how England became a Protestant nation has led to the understanding of a Reformation which

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English Catholicism after the English Reformation?”, *History*, Vol. 85, No. 277 (2000) pp. 28-47, pp. 30, 32, 45. Questier rejects the conclusion that Catholicism became seigniorial, and instead argues that Catholicism was ‘a series of dissident oppositional expressions of religious motive’ in his *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 204-205. See also his *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Haigh, ‘The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation’, pp. 39-40. He insists ‘The deepest foundations of post-Reformation Catholicism were medieval, in both its piety and its structure’ (p. 69). These sentiments were expressed again, along with an analysis of the initial weakness and southern focus of the Jesuit missionaries, in ‘From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 31 (1981), pp. 129-47. See also Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1993) and for criticism of Walsham see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, ‘Introduction’, in Lake and Questier (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp. ix-xx.

<sup>73</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, ‘Introduction: re-thinking the “English Reformation”’, in idem., (ed.), *England’s Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London: University College Press, 1998), pp. 1-32, p. 2; Haigh, *English Reformations*; idem., (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (London: Yale University Press, 1992); Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>74</sup> Tyacke has shown that this ‘newer’ Revisionist portrayal of events was actually ‘an old one resurrected’ which retold arguments from Catholic scholars from the turn of the twentieth century, Tyacke, ‘Introduction: re-thinking the “English Reformation”’, pp. 2-3. See F.A. Gasquet, *The Eve of the Reformation* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co, 1900); H.N. Birt, *The Elizabethan Religious Settlement* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907).

<sup>75</sup> Eamon Duffy, ‘The Long Reformation: Catholicism, Protestantism and the multitude’, in Tyacke (ed.), *England’s Long Reformation 1500-1800*, pp. 33-70, p. 36; Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘The impact of the English Reformation’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1995), pp. 151-53, p. 152.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie, ‘Introduction: Protestantisms and their beginnings’, in idem., (eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-13, pp. 3-4. See also Ethan H. Shagan, ‘Introduction: English Catholic history in context’, in idem., (ed.), *Catholics and the ‘Protestant nation: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 1-21.

‘left many trapped for some time in a kind of confessional limbo’.<sup>77</sup> The work of Tessa Watt, David Cressy, Ronald Hutton, Peter Lake, Patrick Collinson and Michael MacDonald has outlined how pre-existing traditions were adapted in the face of this changing religious position.<sup>78</sup> As Alexandra Walsham has noted:

We are beginning to see the outlines of a religious culture which, if not thoroughly Protestant by exacting clerical standards, was distinctively post-Reformation: a culture consisting of ‘a patchwork of beliefs’ and practices which displays as many points of overlap with, as departures from, the moral and devotional emphases of medieval Catholicism—a culture, furthermore, which cut across the barriers erected by status and class, education and wealth.<sup>79</sup>

Several aspects of a thriving pre-Reformation culture were assimilated, in Certeau’s sense of making similar rather than becoming similar to, into a new post-Reformation religious culture. Through the work of scholars like Walsham, Helen C. White, Ian Green, John R. Yamamoto-Wilson and Carlos M. N. Eire we are reminded that flowering currents of Catholic devotion were still popular among a Protestant audience, especially the works of Francis de Sales and Robert Persons’s *First Booke of the Christian Exercise*.<sup>80</sup> Yamamoto-Wilson’s caution that English interest in Catholic spirituality was not always a sign of ‘Protestant backsliding’, but was rather a ‘facet of mainstream Protestant culture’ is pertinent

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<sup>77</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); idem., ‘The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore’, *Past & Present* Vol. 148, No. 1 (1995), pp. 89-116; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Peter Lake, ‘Deeds Against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 257-84; idem., ‘Popular form, Puritan content? Two Puritan appropriations of the murder pamphlet from mid-seventeenth-century London’, in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 313-34; Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation* (Reading: University of Reading, 1986) idem., *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), ch. 4; Michael MacDonald has shown that attitudes towards insanity and mental disorders remained rooted in medieval concepts well into the late seventeenth century in his *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>79</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 5. Walsham’s work on providence should also be considered within this ‘post-revisionist’ milieu.

<sup>80</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘“Domme Preachers”? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 168 (2000), pp. 72-123; Helen C. White, *English Devotional Literature (Prose) 1600-1640* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1931); Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); John R. Yamamoto-Wilson, ‘The Protestant Reception of Catholic Devotional Literature in England to 1700’, *Recusant History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2014), pp. 67-90; Carlos M. N. Eire, ‘Early modern Catholic piety in translation’, in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 83-100.

to this entire thesis.<sup>81</sup> ‘The omnivorous devotional habits of early modern Protestants’, Alec Ryrie suggests, ‘are one sign that, even in this age of antagonism, being Protestant did not necessarily mean hating Catholics’.<sup>82</sup> The rhetoric which cast Catholicism as the Continental ‘other’ and Protestantism as decidedly ‘English’ did not prevent the exchange of ideas and imagery, nor indeed stop Protestants in England from reading and treasuring Catholic texts.<sup>83</sup> In regards to works of contemplation and mystical theology, we should be mindful of demand for works of this nature from the late-medieval English laity, some of whom wanted to ‘begin a spiritual journey that was once the exclusive terrain of the contemplative’.<sup>84</sup> On the eve of the Reformation in England aristocratic patronage, testament charity, and the great monasteries of Syon and Sheen had exposed the English laity to mystical texts and the contemplative tradition in a way that allowed them to shape their own religious experience.<sup>85</sup> The Reformation may have dissolved the monasteries where these works were once

<sup>81</sup> Yamamoto-Wilson, ‘The Protestant Reception of Catholic Devotional Literature’, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 291-292. See also Alison Shell’s comment on how ‘very little real difference there was between Catholic and Protestant spirituality’ in devotional terms in her *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, p. 16.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Lake, ‘Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice’, in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642* (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 72–106; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>84</sup> Hilary M. Carey, ‘Devout Literate Laypeople and the Pursuit of the Mixed Life in Later Medieval England’, *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1987), pp. 361–81, p. 361.

<sup>85</sup> For aristocratic patronage see Barbara J. Harris, ‘A New Look at the Reformation: Aristocratic Women and Nunneries, 1450 – 1540’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1993), pp. 89–113; Joel T. Rosenthal, ‘Aristocratic Cultural Patronage and Book Bequests, 1350-1500’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Vol. 64 (1982), pp. 522–48; M. Deanesly, ‘Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries’, *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1920), pp. 349–58; H. S. Bennett, ‘The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century’, *The Library, Fifth Series*, Vol. 1, No. 3/4 (1946), pp. 167–78; Susan Groag Bell, ‘Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture’, *Signs*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1982), pp. 742–68. For testament charity see Michael G. Sargent, ‘Walter Hilton’s Scale of Perfection: The London Manuscript Group Reconsidered’, *Medium Aevum*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (1983), pp. 189–216; Wendy Scase, ‘Reginald Pecock, John Carpenter and John Colop’s “Common-Profit” Books: Aspects of Book Ownership and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century London’, *Medium Aevum*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (1992), pp. 261–74; Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, ‘A “Common Profit” Library in Fifteenth-Century England and Other Books For Chaplains’, *Manuscripta*, Vol. 28 (1984), pp. 17–25; Raymond Smith, ‘The Library at Guildhall in the 15th and 16th Centuries’, *The Guildhall Miscellany*, Vol. 1 (1952), pp. 3–9; Margaret Connolly, ‘Books for the “Helpe of Euery Persoone þat þenkip to Be Saued”’: Six Devotional Anthologies from Fifteenth-Century London’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 33 (2003), pp. 170–81. For interactions between monastery and laity see Michael G. Sargent, ‘The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1976), pp. 225–40; Vincent Gillespie, ‘Syon and the English Market for Continental Printed Books: The Incunable Phase’, *Religion and Literature*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2005), pp. 27–49; E.A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Syon Abbey and Its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, C.1400-1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010); J. T. Rhodes, ‘Syon Abbey and Its Religious Publications in the Sixteenth Century’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (1993), pp. 11–25; C. Annette Grisé, ‘The Textual Community of Syon Abbey’, *Florilegium*, Vol. 19 (2002), pp. 149–62; David J. Falls, ‘The Carthusian Milieu of Nicholas Love’s Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ’, in Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall (eds.), *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 331–40.

produced, but it had also ‘democratized’ religious life even further. Luther himself approached the *Theologia Germanica* and works of John Tauler as guides for all Christians, rather than only being suitable for the attention of a spiritual elite.<sup>86</sup> The Reformation had only further encouraged the laity to access works once considered the preserve of the contemplative.<sup>87</sup> Indeed mystical theology proved to be so popular among Protestants in England that by the mid-seventeenth century Benedictine authors had to provide a separate epistle in their published works on the topic for ‘the Reader who is not Catholike’. Although these epistles condemned non-Catholics reading works of mystical theology outright, they revealed much about their popularity in England and the ongoing thirst for such works which had begun in the late medieval period.<sup>88</sup> This thesis therefore argues that the emergence of ‘mysticism’ as a Christian enthusiasm in the 1730s was a consequence of the assimilation of Catholic sources of mystical theology by Protestants across the seventeenth century in an ongoing ‘long Reformation’.<sup>89</sup>

To trace the reception of mystical theology in England is to create a narrative which does not always unfold within England itself. A large part of the Catholic narrative developed on the Continent among Benedictine monks and nuns in exile. As Christopher Highley has argued, exile to the Continent was often ‘a multicultural contact zone’, and these exiles have often been overlooked ‘in favor of other groupings within the Catholic community like martyrs or Church Papists’.<sup>90</sup> Liesbeth Coren’s recent article has shown that despite English convents being characterized as hotbeds of popery, and the dominant identity of ‘Englishness’ not including Catholics, many English Protestants would visit convents while touring the Low Countries, placing themselves in an ‘ambiguous position between religious and national identity’.<sup>91</sup> The Benedictine exiles are given central focus in

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<sup>86</sup> Edward Howells, ‘Early Modern Reformations’, in Hollywood and Beckman (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 114-34, p. 116. For a similar discussion of the emergence of mystical theology outside of the monastic setting in early modern Spain, see Juan Miguel Marin, ‘Mystical Theology in the Early Jesuit Mission to Colonial Paraguay: Contemplation and Action at the Hispanic-American Frontier’, *The Way*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2008), pp. 77-94.

<sup>87</sup> Works of contemplation and mystical theology also featured in debates at the very heart of the Reformation. Thomas More, in debates with William Tyndale, recommended ‘people unlearned’ to busy themselves with prayer, meditation and the reading of English books including Bonaventure, the *De Imitatione Christi* and Walter Hilton’s *The Scale of Perfection* in his *The co[n]futacyon of Tyndales answeare made by syr Thomas More knyght lorde chau[n]cellour of Englonde* (London, 1532), sig. Eeiii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> See Chapter 4 below.

<sup>89</sup> This assimilation was so successful that ‘mysticism’ was neither a Catholic nor Protestant problem by the eighteenth century, but a wider Christian one.

<sup>90</sup> Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> Liesbeth Corens, ‘Catholic Nuns and English Identities: English Protestant Travellers on the English Convents in the Low Countries, 1660-1730’, *Recusant History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2011), pp. 441-59, p. 442. See also Claire Walker, ‘Priests, nuns, presses and prayers: the Southern Netherlands and the contours of English Catholicism’, in Kaplan, Moore, Nierop and Pollman (eds.), *Catholic*

this thesis, for it is only possible to write the history of mystical theology in seventeenth-century England by keeping one eye firmly on events and groups on the Continent. To attempt otherwise would be to fall foul of the ‘anachronistic parameters of national historiography’.<sup>92</sup> This study is conscious of the variety of ongoing religious movements on the Continent, such as Pietism in Germany and Quietism in France, and attempts to weave these into an understanding of mystical theology in the seventeenth century. Keeping these Continental connections in focus is the only way to arrive at an accurate explanation of how mysticks came to play a role in the religious beliefs of groups as diverse as the Benedictines, antinomians and Philadelphians in England.

### **The EEBO full-text corpus**

The corpus of texts that this thesis engages with has largely been shaped by digital resources. One in particular, *Early English Books Online* (EEBO), has been indispensable to this study. EEBO contains digitised copies of almost all works featured in the Pollard & Redgrave and Wing short title catalogues, as well as the Thomason Tract and Tract Supplement collections. The EEBO Text Creation Partnership has worked to convert these digital scans into fully searchable texts, allowing the user to survey uses of certain words quickly, and collect quantitative as well as qualitative data.<sup>93</sup> Many scholars have used this to discuss the frequency of words- either within titles of sources, or within the sources themselves.<sup>94</sup> Richard Sugg, for example, has used EEBO to trace the early modern ‘rhetoric of anatomy’ by surveying and commenting on works that featured ‘anatomy’ in the title.<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Wardhaugh has traced a number of phrases including ‘mathematics’, ‘geometry’ and ‘arithmetic’ to analyse the frequency and uses of such vocabulary across the period.<sup>96</sup> John Coffey admits in his *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution* (2008) that EEBO was

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*Communities in Protestant States*, pp. 139-55; idem., *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Caroline Bowden, ‘The English Convents in Exile and Questions of National Identity, 1600–1688’, in David Worthington (ed.), *Emigrants and Exiles from the Three Kingdoms in Europe, 1603–1688* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 297–315.

<sup>92</sup> Jonathan Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> For more information see the EEBO website [<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/about/about.htm#newft>, accessed 23 July 2014]

<sup>94</sup> Withington makes extensive use of the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) to this effect in his *Society in Early Modern England*.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Sugg, *Murder after Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Wardhaugh, ‘Mathematics In English Printed Books, 1473-1800: A Bibliometric Analysis’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2009), pp. 325-38.

a resource which had transformed his research, while Ann Moyer describes it as ‘a resource unrivalled in any other language’.<sup>97</sup>

Yet caution must be taken in what Roy Rosenzweig describes as ‘the future of the past in the digital age’.<sup>98</sup> An example is Coffey’s above mentioned work, which was criticised by Jason Peacey as highlighting the ‘potential dangers of the EEBO age’.<sup>99</sup> The main question to be levelled at EEBO is its usefulness as a representation of English print culture as a whole and the conclusions scholars can draw from a resource that does not represent every work published in the period. Wardhaugh warns of some of these limitations, describing how ‘these statistics do not describe “surviving early English books” but the EEBO and ECCO full-text corpora, still less do they describe the total population of the works that were actually printed in English, many of which have not survived’.<sup>100</sup> We must also be aware of Andrew Pettegree’s warning for ‘the EEBO generation’, in which he reminds us that EEBO is a national bibliography, and unlike Danish, Polish and Czech versions, does not include books by nationals which were published in other languages. EEBO therefore can sometimes encourage an insular approach to early modern studies, and Pettegree rightly warns us to remember that ‘intellectual life was not narrowly chauvinistic or nationalist, but international’.<sup>101</sup> In using the EEBO full-text corpus as its core, this thesis therefore cannot claim to have completely decoded every attitude to mystical theology and ‘mysticks’ in the period, but rather to have given as comprehensive an overview as resources presently allow.

Another problem is a more obvious one- that EEBO does not allow historians insights into manuscript sources. Works translated and circulated privately, or for the consideration of only a few, are entirely missing from the database and present a danger of misrepresentation. Any sole reliance on pamphlet and printed works, such as those found on EEBO, is therefore questionable. As a result this thesis supplements the variety of works accessed through EEBO with a plethora of additional manuscript sources relating to each of the major groups addressed in this thesis: Benedictines, Puritans and Philadelphians. Indeed

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<sup>97</sup> John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), p. xvii; Ann Moyer, *Vernacular Languages and Dialect: Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> Jason Peacey, ‘Review: John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England by John Coffey’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (2008), pp. 640-42, p. 642.

<sup>100</sup> Wardhaugh, ‘Mathematics In English Printed Books’, p. 336.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew Pettegree, ‘Afterword’, in Polly Ha & Patrick Collinson (eds.), *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 229-36, pp. 235-6.



if we were to rely on EEBO alone, the role of Augustine Baker in the narrative of attitudes towards mystical theology in the seventeenth century would be greatly reduced; his true contribution is to be found in manuscript sources. Such criticisms of EEBO has led some scholars such as Jeffrey Todd Knight to remind us of the benefits of archival work, highlighting the intricate ‘ghost images’ and handwritten curiosities which can often be missed by consulting purely digital copies of texts. He argues the need for ‘renewed incitement to do archival work in archives’ to ensure such important details are not missed.<sup>102</sup>

As a result this study consciously combines an extensive use of EEBO with equally extensive manuscript research. Collectively, the two allow for a greater understanding of attitudes towards mystical theology and the evolution of the term ‘mystick’. Searching EEBO allows relatively quick access to the plethora of texts which contain these terms, significantly shortening the process of finding relevant sources. Yet these search results are taken as signposts towards further in-depth textual analysis, where the usage of these words is analysed within the wider context of the text it features in. To add a second layer of context to this analysis, manuscript sources are used to expose attitudes towards mystical theology not present in printed texts and show how, especially with the Benedictines and Philadelphians, attitudes documented in private manuscripts proved to be more revealing than anything publically printed by either group. By consciously using manuscript sources to somewhat counterbalance EEBO’s reliance on printed texts, this study aims to provide as accurate a depiction of attitudes towards mystical theology as possible.

## Conclusion

The chapter structure for this study is based on Richard Roach’s account of mysticks and mystical theology in his *The Great Crisis* (1725). Not only is this one of the most detailed accounts of mystical theology and mysticks in the period, it also allows us a unique insight into who was considered a mystick in England at the dawn of the eighteenth century. From Roach we gain an understanding that ‘some modern mysticks’ included Augustine Baker and Gertrude More, the latter’s work being ‘full of Breathings of Divine Love, and Interspers’d with Rapt of Divine Poetry’.<sup>103</sup> ‘Dr Jo. Everard’s Sermons’ which spoke of the ‘very Deep things of divinity’ and ‘Francis Rous Provost of Eaton’ both featured on the list, as did Peter Sterry, Henry More, John Worthington and John Norris. Finally were Thomas Bromley, John Pordage and Jane Lead, the latter having earned the ‘Favour of Divine

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<sup>102</sup> Jeffrey Todd Knight, ‘Invisible Ink: A Note on Ghost Images in Early Printed Books’, *Textual Cultures*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2010), pp. 53-62, p. 60.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Roach, *The Great Crisis: or the Mystery of the Times and Seasons Unfolded* (London, 1725), p. 169.

Wisdom'.<sup>104</sup> Using these names as signposts, this study has constructed its five chapters around these groups.

Chapter 1 addresses Augustine Baker's attempts to create a canon of 'mystick authors' for the Benedictine nuns of Cambrai. Baker edited and translated texts by these mysticks into collections, and in doing so provides us with the first example of an English writer engaging with the concept of a canon of 'mystick' texts. This empowered the nuns he wrote for to advance in their own internal spiritual experiences. The chapter traces early resistance to this process, whereby the Baker manuscripts were threatened with censorship, and explores how the nuns struggled to retain ownership of Baker's doctrines in light of this pressure. In providing them with works of mystical theology, it argues that Baker was attempting to transform the nuns themselves into mysticks to generate contributions to his existing canon.

Chapter 2 explores mystical theology in Puritan discourse. It argues that Francis Rous, John Everard and Giles Randall all used mystical theology as a 'way of knowing' to differing Calvinist and antinomian ends. By exploring Presbyterian attacks on the supposed heresies spreading throughout England in the 1640s, it reveals how mystical theology was seen as a 'popish error' by which sectarians were claiming perfection. It explores how Everard translated works of mystical theology for his patrons, and how Randall published similar works for the benefit of all. A central role is given to Benet of Canfield's *The Rule of Perfection*, as well as the *Theologia Germanica*, as Presbyterian fears were only enhanced by the translation and publication of these texts.

Chapter 3 traces the development of the relationship between mystical theology and enthusiasm in the discourses of Interregnum and Restoration Anglicans. Drawing on prevalent medical theories concerning melancholy, defenders of the Church of England sought to discredit both Catholic and sectarian uses of mystical theology as enthusiastical. These writers also labelled mystical theology as 'anti-Christian' and sought to show that the doctrines of Catholicism contained erroneous pagan and heathen remnants, disproving their claims to be the 'true Church'. It finishes by exploring mystical theology in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists, showing how Henry More, John Worthington and John Norris all adapted it to suit their own beliefs.

Chapter 4 focuses on Serenus Cressy, who is often overlooked in favour of Baker. The chapter reveals how Cressy and several fellow Benedictines exposed mystical theology and Baker's manuscript sources to a larger Restoration audience. As Cressy grappled with

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<sup>104</sup> These names are taken from *ibid.*, pp. 99, 105, 165-171.

Church of England divines over the issues of tradition and infallibility, mysticks were seen by his critics as a useful way to discredit the Catholic Church. While Cressy aimed to defend the Catholic claim to unwritten tradition passed down through revelation as a second source of authority alongside the Bible, his opponents saw mysticks as proof that this revelation was nothing more than enthusiasm in disguise. Exploring Cressy's autobiography, *Exomologesis*, and his digest of Baker's teachings, *Sancta Sophia*, reveals the exposure mystical theology gained in the Restoration period. It also documents how the Benedictines struggled to keep their works of mystical theology out of the hands of non-Catholics, who were apparently eagerly using the works to their own ends.

Chapter 5 explores the role of mysticks and mystical theology in the Philadelphian Society. It reimagines the Philadelphian Society not as a simple sect of followers of Jacob Boehme, but rather as the culmination of the enthusiasm for mystical theology which had developed across the seventeenth century. By exploring manuscripts and letters from their key members, their understanding of mystical theology and mysticks is revealed to draw on all the other groups explored in this thesis, blending Catholic and Protestant sources together in their irenic attempts to return to the practices of Christian antiquity. Mystical theology became an important qualifier for the group; it linked them to Continental groups of Pietists and Quietists and allowed them to claim to be the English dimension of a much larger mystical movement. The Philadelphian Society, it is argued here, made mysticks and mystical theology central to their beliefs, and failed to survive due to the growing associations of such concepts with enthusiasm and sectarianism which had developed across the seventeenth century.

Together these chapters illustrate how, by the end of the seventeenth century, an understanding of mystical theology and a canon of mysticks had developed in England. This is done with the aim of revealing the origins of the concept of 'mysticism', which emerged in the 1730s as a catch-all term used to describe ecstatic and enthusiastic Christian beliefs throughout history. Exploring how mystical theology and mysticks became associated with enthusiasm in the seventeenth century will highlight the context of this emergence. Because 'mysticism' was seen as a Christian enthusiasm, rather than specifically associated with Catholics or Protestants, we must trace this development across confessional boundaries. Outlining seventeenth-century debates concerning mystical theology sheds new light on the interactions between Protestants and Catholics in the period and reveals that the confessional boundaries established in the existing historiographical literature were in reality more porous than has been assumed. The permeability of English religious culture in regards to the influence of wider European movements is also explored; attitudes towards mystical

theology in England were closely linked to wider Counter-Reformation trends in spirituality, as well as new developments in the form of Quietism and Pietism. In tracing attitudes towards mystical theology we ultimately touch on a number of key religious issues in the period: how Catholics and Protestants defined themselves in relation to each other, the continuing debates on the role of Scripture, tradition and infallibility made central by the Reformation, the nature and consequences of religious pluralism and toleration, the emerging categorization of rational and enthusiastic religious practices, and attitudes towards personal illumination and spiritual knowledge outside of ecclesiastical control. The history of mystical theology in seventeenth-century England demands that we engage with the some of the most prevalent religious issues of the period.

## Chapter 1: Augustine Baker and the Mysticks at Cambrai

I have lived in a cittie in thes forein partes called Cambraie, assiting a Convent of certain religious English women of the order of St. Benet [...] Their lives being contemplative, the common Bookes of the worlde are not for their purpose, and little or nothing is in thes daies printed in English that is proper for them [...] I am in their behalf become a humble suitor unto you to bestowe on them such books as you please, either manuscript or printed, being in English, conteneing contemplation, Saints Lives, or other devotions.<sup>105</sup>

Augustine Baker's letter to Sir Robert Cotton in 1629 is one that features in the majority of studies on Baker. Prominent not only for revealing Baker's communications with one of the key figures of Caroline England, it also detailed a passion for all things antiquarian which both men shared. Recalling that there 'were manie good English books in the olde time' and that the English Benedictine nuns at Cambrai 'have some, yet they want manie', Baker asked for the works of Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton's *Scala Perfectionis*.<sup>106</sup> Baker had first consulted Cotton's manuscript collection when gathering material for *Apostolatus Benedictorum in Anglia* (1626), a defence of the history of the English Benedictine congregation. While there he would have interacted with other influential scholars and antiquarians writing their own historical accounts. Known visitors included Archbishop James Ussher and topographer William Camden, as well as Catholic, and perhaps Jesuit, users of the library.<sup>107</sup> From Cotton's library Baker collected enough material to constitute six manuscript tomes of research, and a note at the end of the first tome tantalisingly stated 'though I have taken many things, yet there is yet there to be hand [sic] an infinit store of matter more than I have taken out'.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>British Library Cotton MS Julius C. III, fol. 12<sup>r</sup>. A facsimile of this letter can be found in Justin McCann and Hugh Connolly (eds.), *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker and Other Documents Relating to the English Benedictines* (London: John Whitehead & Son Ltd., 1933), p. 280. A transcript is available in Henry Ellis (ed.), *Original letters, Illustrative of English History, Volume III* (London: Harding and Lepard, 1827), pp. 256-58.

<sup>106</sup> British Library Cotton MS Julius C. III, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>107</sup> Leander Prichard's account of Baker's life presents this in very idyllic terms, describing the casual conversations between Baker and Cotton by a fire in a room next to the library, see Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 102<sup>v</sup>-103<sup>r</sup>. P. G. Caraman has speculated that Michael Alford, a Jesuit, would have visited the library while writing his *Annales Ecclesiastici*, see Caraman's, 'Father Michael Alford, S.J. 1587-1652', *An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 31, No. 123 (1942), pp. 361- 68, p. 366.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Barnaby Hughes, 'Augustine Baker and the History of the English Benedictine Congregation', in Geoffrey Scott (ed.), *Dom Augustine Baker 1575-1641* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2012), pp. 19-30, p. 24. Much of Baker's manuscript work in this period would be used by Serenus Cressy for his *The Church-History of Brittany from the beginning of Christianity to the Norman conquest under Roman governours, Brittish kings, the English-Saxon heptarchy, the English-Saxon (and Danish) monarchy* (Rouen, 1668). Prichard's life of Baker shows the freedom of movement Baker had in travelling across England to places such as London, Rochester and Peterborough. He also travelled with a writer or 'scrivener' to help record what he found in manuscript collections, which, together with the cost of buying certain books, totalled expenses of over 200 pounds; Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 101<sup>r</sup>.

Baker saw Cotton's collection as a potential 'spiritual resource' from which he could secure works of a contemplative nature to aid in the nuns' own mystical experiences, and the specific books he requested were likely ones he had noticed on his trip to the library only a few years earlier.<sup>109</sup> But we should not place too much emphasis on Baker's admiration for English writers such as Rolle and Hilton, for in reality he was interested in sourcing, translating and transcribing the texts of authors from a plethora of countries in his role as spiritual advisor at Cambrai.<sup>110</sup> He was specifically looking for texts that dealt with 'Mystick matters', or texts by authors who 'worthily dispose & prepare themselves' to experience the divine knowledge of God.<sup>111</sup> Using the word 'mystick' in the more traditional Middle English sense of 'secret' or 'hidden', or 'beyond the knowing of certain people', Baker believed these texts contained instruction towards, and accounts of experience of God beyond human understanding. The process of Baker grouping texts that contained 'Mystick matters' and labelling them as being written by 'Mystick authors' is the main concern of this chapter. Elizabeth Dutton and Victoria Van Hyning have argued that Baker identified authors as mysticks for the first time in the English language. Their analysis was limited to a small selection of references however and was concerned with deflecting criticism of twentieth-century Catholic scholars from Nicholas Watson's comments over their invention of the category of 'medieval English mystics'.<sup>112</sup> Dutton & Van Hyning argued that Baker's creation of a canon of 'mystick-authors' which did include some English texts, but was substantially Continental in outlook, pre-dated and excused the twentieth-century category, which should be seen as an inheritance of Baker's earlier concept. This is problematized by the fact Baker never created a separate category for English-authored texts, or referenced 'English mysticks' separately. As this chapter shows, the nationality of the mystick authors is never highlighted or stressed by Baker at all. It therefore remains an unconvincing claim that Baker's work 'thoroughly complicates Watson's assertion that the creation of the Middle English mystic canon is a result of twentieth century scholarship with a "confessional bias"'.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> J. T. Rhodes, 'Some Writings Of A Seventeenth-Century English Benedictine: Dom Augustine Baker O.S.B', *The Yale University Library Gazette*, Vol. 67, No. 3/4 (1993), pp. 110-17, p. 111.

<sup>110</sup> See the criticisms of Mark Barrett, who argues that scholars have gone to great lengths to interpret Baker as the guardian of a 'pre-Reformation English tradition' which distorts him into looking like 'the spiritual godfather of UKIP' rather than part of a wider Continental tradition. See his "'A free spirit, a universal figure"'? Some aspects of Augustine Baker's Monastic Spirituality', [<http://www.monlib.org.uk/papers/ebch/2013barrett-baker.pdf>, accessed 01 September 2015].

<sup>111</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Secretum* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> See Introduction above.

<sup>113</sup> Elisabeth Dutton & Victoria Van Hyning, 'Augustine Baker and the Mystical Canon', in Scott (ed.), *Dom Augustine Baker*, pp. 85-110, p. 110. See also Victoria Van Hyning, *Augustine Baker Mystic-Maker: Three Modes of Self-Authorization* (Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Oxford, 2008). This thesis instead shows how the term 'mystick' was used by a variety of groups in the

This chapter frees Baker from this controversy and instead uses references to mysticks from across his entire manuscript corpus and the writings of his followers to explore exactly what he meant when using the terms ‘mysticks’ and ‘mystical theology’. It begins by exploring Baker’s life until he arrived at Cambrai, including his conversion from religious indifference to Catholicism via the reading of spiritual books. It explores the importance Baker placed on reading in his advice to the nuns and the freedom he gave them in their personal spiritual journey. It then traces exactly which authors Baker understood to be mysticks. It argues that Baker did not only consider writers from the past in this category, but rather by editing previous works on mystical theology into accessible and readable digests, he sought to inspire new mysticks to emerge and document their experiences, mainly among the nuns at Cambrai. This builds on the argument of Claire Walker who has convincingly argued that both Baker and the nuns could claim partial ownership of the techniques he created from older writers, as they developed and advanced it together. All devotional and mystical writings were seen as being held in common as ‘spiritual property’ to help others advance on their path to God. It is suggested here that Baker saw both the nuns and historical authors as mysticks, as all aimed for the ultimate goal of union with God.<sup>114</sup> Finally it explores how Baker’s canon of mystick authors was understood by both his followers and critics within the Benedictine order.

### **The Life of Augustine Baker**

He was born David Baker in 1575. His family were described as being ‘neutral in religion’, neither fully Catholic nor Protestant, but conforming to the Church of England under Elizabeth I. Like many with Catholic convictions, they saw in the Church nothing that was not from ‘the former religion, that was Catholick’ and consequently conformed.<sup>115</sup> His place of birth, Abergavenny, was well known for its concentration of Catholics in influential offices. There was a Catholic teacher in the grammar school, a Recorder who had a Benedictine brother and a Jesuit nephew, and a vicar whose family had extensive Catholic

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seventeenth century and for a multitude of reasons. Chapter 5 suggests that specific references to ‘English mystics’ first featured in the manuscripts of the Philadelphian Society at the end of the century. It seems unlikely that twentieth-century Catholic writers would be excused with such enthusiasm via this argument if the true origins of their scholarship is made to lie with a radical Protestant group, rather than the Catholic Baker.

<sup>114</sup> Claire Walker, ‘Spiritual Property: The English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai and the Dispute over the Baker Manuscripts’, in Nancy E. Wright, Margaret W. Ferguson and A. R. Buck (eds.), *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 237- 55.

<sup>115</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 14<sup>v</sup>. The four lives of Augustine Baker, collectively known as the ‘Quadrilogus’, have been transcribed in two publications. For the lives written by Baker and Leander Prichard see McCann and Connolly (eds.), *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker*. For those written by Peter Salvin and Serenus Cressy see Justin McCann (ed.), *The Life of Father Augustine Baker, O.S.B* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1932). Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775 is the only manuscript containing all four lives.

links. Monmouth in general maintained a strong Catholic presence throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>116</sup> The Welsh language had helped to preserve the Catholic faith there, with a constant stream of recusant texts in the sixteenth century, and many women were openly Catholic while their husbands attended the established Church service.<sup>117</sup> Baker therefore grew up in an area that featured a significant number of ‘church papists’.<sup>118</sup> In 1590 he was sent to Oxford, aged sixteen, and was recalled to his family in 1592 after falling into sensual living and ‘viciousness’. Afterwards he studied law for four years in his father’s house. It was after reading Erasmus’s *Colloquies* that Baker fell into ‘a kind of atheism’, helped by studying law ‘whose subject is nothing but worldliness’.<sup>119</sup> In 1596 he travelled to London aged 21 to study at Clifford’s Inn, and afterwards at the Inner Temple, eventually becoming Recorder of Abergavenny in 1598. It was only at the dawn of the seventeenth century that the devout and highly religious man who took the name Augustine emerged from the shell of the ‘atheistical’ and worldly David Baker.

An accident in 1600, according to one of his biographers Leander Prichard, ‘made him stagger in his profane atheism, and inclined him to believe a God and a divine providence’.<sup>120</sup> The event was more poetically described by Serenus Cressy:

Being brought so near a precipice, the divine hand appeared from heaven, to rescue him both from the danger in which his soul was engaged and the cause thereof, sin. The which deliverance was indeed very wonderful, deserving to be circumstantially declared, for the glory of the divine grace and mercy to a soul that thought not on him.<sup>121</sup>

While returning from business Baker attempted to cross the river Monnow which was swollen with rain water. Distracted by thoughts of business, Baker allowed his horse to take him to the middle of a high and narrow bridge, realising all too late that he was stranded and

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<sup>116</sup> Philip Jenkins, ‘Anti-Popery on the Welsh Marches in the Seventeenth Century’, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1980), pp. 275-93, p. 278.

<sup>117</sup> See Arthur F. Marotti’s claim that recusant women represented ‘a figure of resistance to state authority, a sign of the persistence of the “old religion” within the new Protestant nation’ in his ‘Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits and Ideological Fantasies’, in idem., (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), pp. 1-34, p. 3. For representations of this in print, see Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>118</sup> Aidan Bellenger, ‘Baker’s Recusant & Benedictine Context’, in Michael Woodward (ed.), *That Mysterious Man: Essays on Augustine Baker with Eighteen Illustrations* (Abergavenny: Three Peaks Press, 2001), pp. 42-56, p. 44. For more on Catholic outward conformity see Walsham, *Church Papists*.

<sup>119</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 46<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., fol. 71<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., fol. 148<sup>r</sup>. Baker and Cressy share startling similarities in their conversion narratives. Both are brought to the Catholic faith through ‘providence’ after periods of spiritual desolation and continue on to become vital to the Benedictine movement. It is highly likely that seeing these parallels with his own life contributed to Cressy’s fondness for Baker.



facing death. Comprehending that death was imminent, Baker promised to devote his life to God should he survive.<sup>122</sup> His horse promptly turned and safely carried Baker out of danger. In the face of certain death and no means of escape, he attributed his survival to a miracle. From then on he devoted his life to believing in God and divine providence, initially satisfied in being a Christian, rather than choosing a specific denomination.<sup>123</sup> Heavily influenced by his father, who publically followed Protestantism, but privately read many Catholic works of devotion, Catholicism eventually took hold. While visiting Henry Prichard, ‘an honest Catholick gentleman’ in Abergavenny, he browsed and borrowed books on Catholic controversy from Prichard’s library, gaining such a thirst for them that he even began to enquire about such books in London bookshops, despite such works being severely prohibited.<sup>124</sup>

Reading them at first for leisure and recreation, Baker soon ‘made the reading of them his business’ to the point where his will and affection ‘violently carried to love and embrace Catholick religion’.<sup>125</sup> Without great personal contact, nor experience of the living tradition of mainstream Catholicism, Baker had ‘read himself into the Church’.<sup>126</sup> His situation was typical of many Catholics at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Fuelled by printing houses in Antwerp and Louvain, as well as secret printing presses in England, works of piety and repentance spread influence in areas where missionaries from Douai and Rome could not penetrate. Influential works such as Robert Person’s *First Booke of the Christian Exercise*, originally published in 1582, were bestsellers. In the hands of the laity these works became the ‘agent of autonomy, the backbone of a type of domestic piety it was possible to sustain in the virtual absence of a resident priesthood’.<sup>127</sup> Baker was a perfect example of the type of person converted to Catholicism by spiritual works, rather than missionary zeal, in a period of struggling clerical manpower. Details of miracles and saints’ lives circulated heavily in manuscript and print. Accounts such as Margaret Clitherow’s body not decaying for six weeks, or the Thames standing still on the day of Edmund Campion’s execution, were all energetically employed by Jesuit and seminary priests to

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., fol. 72<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., fol. 73<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., fol. 75<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Daniel Rees, ‘Some Factors in the Formation of Fr Baker’, in Woodward (ed.), *That Mysterious Man*, pp. 10-18, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Alexandra Walsham, “‘Domme Preachers’”, p. 81. For more on how Catholicism adapted to the post-Reformation religious landscape, see Lisa McClain, *Lest We Be Damned: Practical Innovation & Lived Experience Among Catholics in Protestant England, 1559- 1642* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Alexandra Walsham, ‘Beads, books and bare ruined choirs: transmutations of Catholic ritual life in Protestant England’, in Benjamin J. Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk Van Nierop and Judith Pollman (eds.), *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c. 1570-1720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 103- 22.

expound the virtues of recusancy and the sacred powers of the priesthood.<sup>128</sup> The ecstasies of the Welsh visionary Elizabeth Orton were recorded and circulated as far as France and Rome by a Douai trained priest. All of these events served to incite Protestants to convert, reinforce the faith of wavering Catholics, or convince young women to join the convents of the Low Countries.<sup>129</sup> Baker's reliance and confidence in the texts of mysticks to inspire the nuns under his supervision stems from his own conversion to Catholicism via the written word. Books, as J.T. Rhodes notes, 'were always to be Baker's primary resource and interest'.<sup>130</sup> His success in converting his sister to Catholicism, as well other activities intended to 'draw others also to the same Catholick communion', show the power such works could have in spreading Catholicism.<sup>131</sup> Eventually he discovered comfort in being 'conversant in true spirituall and mistick authors' which adhered to a 'higher strain of spirituality' such as the *Speculum Perfectionis* translated out of Dutch by Heimerus.<sup>132</sup> Realising his calling was to devote himself completely to God and learn more about this higher spirituality, he became a Benedictine at Padua in 1605, before aggregating to the English congregation at Dieuleward, for whom he served as a missionary in England between 1613 and 1624.

The Elizabethan Settlement had prevented Catholics from completing degrees at Oxford and Cambridge, and as a result many chose to study at the newly formed seminaries of Douai (1568), Rome (1576), Valladolid (1589), Seville (1592) and St. Omer (1593). Although initially academic institutions, Pope Pius V's papal bull calling for English Catholics to depose Elizabeth transformed the seminaries into the training grounds of missionary priests, especially under the leadership of William Allen and Robert Persons in

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<sup>128</sup> See Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Thomas M. McCoog, 'Constructing martyrdom in the English Catholic community, 1582- 1602', in Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation'*, pp. 95-127. Physical sites could also be used to encourage recusancy, see Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. ch. 3.

<sup>129</sup> Alexandra Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2003), pp. 779-815, p. 806. For more on Orton see Lucy Underwood, *Childhood, Youth, and Religious Dissent in Post-Reformation England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), ch. 8. For Protestant reaction to her see Adam H. Kitzes, "'Let not Phantasies Misgouerne You": Entertainment as Religious Polemic (The Case of Barnabe Riche)', in Verena Theile and Andrew D. McCarthy (eds.), *Staging the Superstitions of Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 39-58. For a more general overview of Catholic attitudes towards the supernatural, see Francis Young, *English Catholics and the Supernatural, 1553- 1829* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). For more on conversions to Catholicism, see Molly Murray "'Now I am a Catholique": William Alabaster and the Early Modern Catholic Conversion Narrative', in Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highley, and Arthur F. Marotti (eds.), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), pp. 189- 215; Catherine Sanok, 'The Lives of Women Saints of Our Contrie of England: Gender and Nationalism in Recusant Hagiography', in Corthell et al. (eds.), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, pp. 261-80.

<sup>130</sup> Rhodes, 'Some Writings Of A Seventeenth-Century English Benedictine', p. 110.

<sup>131</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 77<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 93<sup>v</sup>.

the 1580s.<sup>133</sup> The flourishing of the missionary priesthood, who travelled abroad to train and then returned to their localities, had a direct effect. Numbering 300 in 1600, by 1640 missionary priests had increased to around 750.<sup>134</sup> The reigns of James I and Charles I were thus characterized by expansion; the number of priests in England and the ratio of priests to the Catholic population reached a level in the 1630s not equalled until the 1850s. The number of Jesuits increased from 18 in 1598 to 43 in 1607, rising to between 150 and 200 for the rest of the century, while figures for the Benedictines suggest around 50-60 were in England around 1630.<sup>135</sup> In the colleges English missionaries were exposed to larger Continental Catholic educational and academic trends; performances at the colleges were given in Hebrew, English, Welsh, French, Italian, Spanish and Flemish.<sup>136</sup> Negotiations to set up a Benedictine mission to England had begun in Italy in 1594 and were supported by numerous English students in the Jesuit colleges who wished to become monks. The situation was tense in the colleges between pro- and anti-Jesuit factions, and the need to set up a Benedictine mission to England was spurred on by Jesuit plans to retake England and divide monastic lands and possessions among themselves.<sup>137</sup> If a Benedictine mission to England could be arranged, they could lay claim to those lands in the event of a reconversion.<sup>138</sup> So many left the English colleges to join the Benedictines in Spain that an English Benedictine college was founded at Douai in 1607, although originally part of the Cassinese and Spanish missions.<sup>139</sup> Baker played a role in securing the continuity of the

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<sup>133</sup> For the priest-hunting that followed see Julian Yates, 'Parasitic Geographies: Manifesting Catholic Identity in Early Modern England', in Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, pp. 63-84.

<sup>134</sup> Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, p. 279.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 216; Hibbard, 'Early Stuart Catholicism', p. 11. Of course Christopher Haigh has argued that most of these regular and secular clergy served gentry households, rather than becoming 'peripatetic pastors to the rural poor'. See his 'From Monopoly to Minority', pp. 133, 139; *idem.*, 'The Continuity of Catholicism', p. 40; *idem.*, 'Revisionism, the Reformation and the History of English Catholicism', pp. 399, 404.

<sup>136</sup> Mark Netzloff, 'The English Colleges and the English Nation: Allen, Persons, Verstegan, and Diasporic Nationalism', in Corthell et al. (eds.), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, pp. 236-60, pp. 237, 246. For more on Catholic concepts of 'nationhood' in the period see Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation*.

<sup>137</sup> This took place within the context of the ongoing 'Appellant Controversy'. For more information on the struggles between the Appellants and Jesuits in England, see Leo F. Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 128-30; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, ch. 5; Michael L. Carrafiello, *Robert Parsons and English Catholicism, 1580-1610* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1998), ch. 6; Patrick Martin and John Finnis, 'The Secret Sharers: "Anthony Rivers" and the Appellant Controversy, 1601-2', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (2006), pp. 195-238; Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons's Jesuit Polemic, 1580-1610* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), ch. 6.

<sup>138</sup> David Lunn, *The English Benedictines, 1540-1688: From Reformation to Revolution* (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), p. 23.

<sup>139</sup> For a contemporary account of the movement of the Benedictines, see Lewis Owen, *The Running Register: Recording a True Relation of the State of the English Colledges, Seminaries and Cloysters in all forraigne parts* (London, 1626), pp. 84-96. Philip Jebb and David M. Rogers note that many men had joined earlier Spanish and Italian Benedictine congregations due to the 'strong urge to return to their native country to work for the survival and propagation of the old faith'; Philip Jebb and David

English Benedictines via Sigebert Buckley, supposedly the last survivor of the pre-Reformation Westminster Abbey congregation. Through the process of aggregation Buckley transferred all the rights and property of the pre-Reformation English Benedictines to the new monks, allowing them to form a distinct English congregation which was eventually given papal approval in 1619.<sup>140</sup> When the legitimacy of this congregation was attacked, Baker was called upon to visit the archives and libraries of England, including the collections of Robert Cotton, to prove the existence of a pre-Reformation English congregation. By 1633 the English Benedictines had succeeded in their claims to ownership of the former monastic lands of England, appointing nine Cathedral priors who would occupy these lands should England become Catholic once more.<sup>141</sup>

### **Baker at Cambrai: Reading as Poaching**

The start of the seventeenth century had seen a revival of the English Benedictines as part of a wider process of renewed enthusiasm for the monastic orders. The writings and reforming tendencies of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross had brought fame to the Carmelites in Spain, while Isabella Berinzaga and Achille Gagliardi in Italy and Benet of Canfield in France had encouraged religious reform that had a ‘truly mystical character’.<sup>142</sup> The first convent for Benedictine nuns was established in Brussels in 1598. The founding party of nine that arrived in Cambrai in 1623 to establish the latest convent included three descendants of the Catholic martyr Thomas More: Dame Gertrude, Dame Agnes, and Dame Anne, all of whom had a strong idea about the kind of spiritual guidance they were looking for.<sup>143</sup> Abbess Frances Gawen, Prioress Pudentiana Deacons and Novice Mistress Vivina Yaxley, three nuns from the Brussels convent, were sent to train them. This training was heavily influenced by Jesuit teaching, and taught them ‘excessive methodising of prayer, without sufficient regard for individual needs’.<sup>144</sup> Ignatian piety had been transformed from Loyola’s original scheme, which allowed a variety of experiences from meditation to mystical contemplation, into a more conventional practical piety that restricted the role of rapture and revelation.<sup>145</sup> But this strict form of ‘mechanical piety’ unsettled the nuns.<sup>146</sup>

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M. Rogers, ‘Rebirth’, in *The Benedictines in Britain* (London: The British Library, 1980), pp. 92-102, p. 92.

<sup>140</sup>Lunn, *The English Benedictines*, pp. 92, 107.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>142</sup> David Lunn, ‘Augustine Baker (1575 – 1641) and the English Mystical Tradition’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1975), pp. 267-77, p. 268.

<sup>143</sup> Placid Spearritt, ‘The Survival of Mediaeval Spirituality among the Exiled English Black Monks’, *American Benedictine Review*, Vol. 25 (1974) pp. 287-316, p. 289.

<sup>144</sup> Marion Norman, ‘Dame Gertrude More and the English Mystical Tradition’, *Recusant History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1976), pp. 196-211, p. 200.

<sup>145</sup> Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe*, p. 141.

<sup>146</sup> Walker, *Spiritual Property*, p. 240.

President of the English Congregation, Rudesind Barlow, heard of the many disturbed consciences and sought out a spiritual advisor to help resolve the situation- and so Augustine Baker was sent to Cambrai.<sup>147</sup>

The nuns of the new convent had entered into a world of contemplation, silence and enclosure, a life where ‘every thought, word, and deed was for God alone’.<sup>148</sup> Baker’s earlier life, which developed his belief that reading could bring clarity and understanding to inner religious experience, influenced the works of spiritual guidance he produced for the nuns.<sup>149</sup> What followed was an incredibly productive nine-year period in which Baker digested works he thought suitable for the nuns, so that they in turn could take what they required from them to advance their own inner journey. Adopting a non-interventionist approach, he encouraged the nuns to read as widely as they could to provide context and understanding when they eventually experienced mystical contemplation. At a time when rigid confessional practices promoted strict ecclesiastical control of personal spirituality, Baker was generating works that instead helped the nuns assert their ‘spiritual independence’.<sup>150</sup>

Baker’s attitudes to the nuns’ spirituality is surprising in two ways. First was his prominent and at times quite vocal disapproval of the Jesuit meditative practices, which he insisted were inappropriate for their needs. While he did not discredit them on account of containing ‘unlawfull doctrine’, Baker instead argued that such exercises were more suited to secular persons or those living the active religious life.<sup>151</sup> His criticism was garbed in the prevalent attitude towards women in the period, for he insisted that the women he guided ‘neither have learning [...] nor have so much strength in heads or bodies’ to undertake the strenuous meditations of the Jesuits, and advised the nuns that the time they would need to dedicate would ‘sequester yourselfe from the rest of the house, which in my mind is inconvenient if not scandalous’.<sup>152</sup> The perceived weaknesses of their sex, along with the inherent isolation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, were the two factors that Baker reasoned should excuse the nuns from such practices.<sup>153</sup> As a result he was free to tailor his advice to each

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<sup>147</sup> His time there was funded by a *peculium* or small private income, essentially making him a ‘tabler’ or paying guest at Cambrai; Bellenger, ‘Baker’s Recusant & Benedictine Context’, p. 56.

<sup>148</sup> Heather Wolfe, ‘Reading Bells and Loose Papers: Reading and Writing Practices of the English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai and Paris’, in Victoria E. Burke & Jonathan Gibson (ed.), *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 135-56, p. 135.

<sup>149</sup> For a chronology of Baker’s works up to 1629 see John Clark, ‘Towards a chronology of Father Baker’s Writings’, in Scott (ed.), *Dom Augustine Baker*, pp. 111-32, esp. pp. 131-2.

<sup>150</sup> Walker, *Spiritual Property*, p. 241.

<sup>151</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Discretion* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>153</sup> This is not to say that Baker did not appreciate the contribution of Jesuit spirituality. As John Clark has noted, many of his works included references to Jesuit books, and some of his reading lists suggested some; John Clark, ‘Augustine Baker, O.S.B: Towards a Re-Assessment’, *Studies in Spirituality*, Vol. 14 (2004), pp. 209-24, p. 214. Jesuit works of mystical theology were often printed,

nun individually, rather than enforcing general codes of practice, which in turn granted freedom to the nuns. Through this we understand Baker's assertion that 'Intelligences yet & illustrations do not proceed from any sett exercise to which one is proprietarily affixed, but rather from some externall cause or other, as by occasion of reading, talking, reflexion, his owne choice for that time of that matter, or some other such like cause'.<sup>154</sup> It was an Augustinian and affective tradition of spiritual practice Baker promoted, which contrasted the discursive methods of meditation that was so prevalent in the Jesuit teachings of the period.<sup>155</sup>

The second major aspect of Baker's attitude to the nuns' spirituality was his insistence on books as spiritual guides. In his biography of Baker, Prichard sums up his approach to spiritual books succinctly. If a man was to enter into the contemplative life and had the choice between knowing an expert in spirituality or good books on the subject, then the man should always choose the good book. An expert guide might 'hinder you to make benefit of books proper for your vocation', and therefore a 'dumb master' or book was preferable to a speaking one.<sup>156</sup> The nuns were to foster their own internal prayer, using mystical texts as their source material for inspiration. In his own defence of his works, Baker made it clear that he had sourced and translated works of a contemplative nature because the nuns 'have no instructions save those general of bookes that are made for all, and have not besides some instructions proper for their individuall & particular spiritts'. Many of those works dealt with external prayer, obedience, 'corporall labours' and vocal prayers of obligation, but devoted little time to mental prayer. The nuns had regularly complained to him that 'they found no advancement or satisfaction to their interior by all those obediences & vocall prayer, for want of some mentall'.<sup>157</sup> Baker was forced to 'vary from the general instructions that are in bookes' and produce works that dealt with the specific needs of the nuns.<sup>158</sup> In doing so, during his lifetime, it is estimated that Baker wrote over a million words across his entire manuscript corpus.<sup>159</sup>

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including during the time Baker was at Cambrai. See for example Achilles Galliard, *An abridgement of Christian perfection Containing many excellent precepts, & advertiments, touching the holy, and sacred mysticall divinity. Written in Italian, by Fa. Achilles Galliard of the Society of Jesus, & translated into English, A.H. of the same society* (Saint-Omer, 1625).

<sup>154</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Directions for Contemplation: Book H* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>155</sup> Dorothy L. Latz, 'The Mystical Poetry of Dame Gertrude More', *Mystics Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1990), pp. 66-82, p. 66.

<sup>156</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 94r.

<sup>157</sup> John Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2008), pp. 63-4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>159</sup> Clark, 'Augustine Baker, O.S.B: Towards a Re-Assessment', p. 211.

Baker justified his attitude to spirituality through the Benedictine *Rule*. Arguing that ‘common bookes’ did not contain the ‘particular necessities & cases of each soul with their proper remedies’, he used the example of the *Rule* as not containing everything needed for an internal life. Thus Benedict of Nursia had promoted the reading of other good books. Only through the practice of the *Rule*, the reading of other books, and undertaking particular instructions made for the individual could progress be made. Thus many who had observed the *Rule* and ‘everie particular of it to an haire’ had made ‘no progress in spirit, yea doe not know what a true spirituall life meaneth’.<sup>160</sup> Baker knew that the most successful way to elevate the nuns’ own inner contemplative experiences was to combine the *Rule* and the reading of contemplative books with his own spiritual council when necessary. Indeed the *Rule* allowed freedom for the construction of individual mental prayers:

the forme or matter whereof we have no rule or obligation, but each spirit is therein left to itselfe & to the guidance of the divine spirit; And each ones owne experience (assisted with the divine grace & lighte) will teach him both the matter & manner of his prayer; & herein he is more to regard & observe such experiences of his owne & tract of God, then the particular instructions of men or of bookes, which (as to prayer) do chiefly serve for to sett one in the beginning of his way, & will not suffize for the guidance of him in his further progresse in spirit.<sup>161</sup>

In one chastising passage Baker reminded the nuns that whereas before dedicating themselves to the contemplative life they may have read a good book ‘out of some curiosity or to drive away the time’, they should now read them ‘with a serious resolution of putting in practise whatsoever you read’. Books should no longer be given a ‘bare delightful reading’, but rather seriously considered to assess whether the work had any useful instruction which could be executed ‘when it shall be time & place for it’.<sup>162</sup> Each nun was encouraged to read contemplative texts and develop the skills to discern sections that were useful. Although Baker had translated and produced texts for the nuns based on what he considered might be useful, they in turn continued this process of selection. One particular source they should avoid however was public sermons, for ‘unlesse that the preachers be such as do leade or have ledde internal lives [...] your lives are or shuld be internall, more harkening to internall instruction then to instructions from without’.<sup>163</sup> Even in this, Baker left the decision over whether sermons were useful to each individual nun, who could take as she pleased.

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<sup>160</sup> Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, p. 71.

<sup>161</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book H*, p. 13.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37-38.

<sup>163</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Directions for Contemplation: Book F* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1999), p. 4.

All this, however, was secondary to the one true guide in the contemplative life-God himself. Because of this fact Baker insisted that ‘all the books in the world will not alone suffice for the directing & guiding of a soul in the way of perfection; noe nor yet all the externall obediences that can be imposed by superiors’. God was to be viewed as the ‘prime guid’ above books and men, the ultimate source the individual should follow.<sup>164</sup> Because ‘each soul is to exercise herself towards God in such manner as may be the best for the soul & may cause her the greatest progresse’, the nuns were to take whatever path was presented to them in their inner journey.<sup>165</sup> They should not be afraid if they read books which contradicted their own experiences, and rather than change their approach to that which they had read about, which might ‘greatly prejudice’ the nun, they were told to ‘follow your owne observation & experience’.<sup>166</sup>

Thus Baker’s letter to Cotton is given its full context. His aim was to help the nuns in their inner contemplative journey; to provide them with the material from which each could take whatever they considered useful. In rejecting the external world and devoting themselves entirely to God, Baker felt the nuns had the right to access a whole branch of literature that would previously not have been suitable for them. This literature contained ‘Mystick matters’, only suitable for those who ‘do really Lead or pursu internall lives, or at least are so well Conceited thereof’ and have the understanding to ‘Reverence with Silence what they find therein above their Knowledge, or different from their own Practice or Course of life, then deride or deprave the Same’.<sup>167</sup> The journey to an inner experience of God was long and arduous, but the nuns were told to read the works of the ‘mystick masters’ concerning mystical experience and have patience.<sup>168</sup> They would ‘at length securely come to perfection of prayer’, but should walk ‘fair & softly’ while waiting for it because, like the old English proverb Baker reminded them of, ‘a soft fire makes sweet malt’.<sup>169</sup>

### **The Mystick Way of Contemplation**

What the nuns were aspiring to was nothing short of mystical contemplation, or what Baker described as the ‘mystick way’. Yet before we discuss exactly which mysticks Baker encouraged the nuns to read, and the various mystical texts that were available to them, we need to establish exactly what Baker considered the ‘mystick way’ to be. Through this we will gain a greater understanding of exactly why Baker labelled writers as mysticks and

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<sup>164</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Doubts and Calls* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>165</sup> Clark (ed.), *Discretion*, p. 49.

<sup>166</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book F*, p. 34.

<sup>167</sup> Clark (ed.), *Secretum*, p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> Clark (ed.), *Doubts and Calls*, p. 28.

<sup>169</sup> Clark (ed.), *Discretion*, p. 19.



exactly what he meant when describing them as such. An exploration of what Baker understood as mystical contemplation will also reveal some of the more interesting concepts of his teaching; mainly the anti-scholasticism found in his fierce rejection of human intellect and learning, and his insistence that the unlearned and feeble would advance quickly in the art of mystical theology.

A starting point is *The Anchor of the Spirit*, labelled as such by Baker because the treatise, like the anchor of a ship which survived all storms and tempests, would help the soul against 'all tentations & perils that may occurred in a spirituall life & will hold her fast to God'.<sup>170</sup> It began with a series of verses that expressed the main characteristics of the inner life:

Remember this,  
That all is his  
Who only is.

What I find I will not mind,  
For what I mind, I shall not find;

My light is faith, my hope is no possession;  
My love unstinted, this is my condition.

In free will  
Is all the skill;  
Use it rightly,  
& be happy;  
In desolation  
Or tentation,  
Consolation  
Or affliction;  
In confusion  
Or distraction,  
As well in darknesse  
As in lightnesse,  
& in rigour  
As in fervour.  
You have it still,  
Beleeve that will,  
Above in mens,  
Though not with sense.

As God doth reigne in all tranquillity,  
So doe you live to your ability,  
Quiet in mind & sensuality.<sup>171</sup>

Although exposition on each section followed in the rest of Baker's text, this small opening section outlined the approach the nuns should take. In the first stanza alone it is explained

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<sup>170</sup> Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

that the nuns were dependent on God for mystical experience. They should not resist whatever he granted unto them, nor think of any created or worldly thing, which would only serve to distract them. Other lines affirmed that such experiences were beyond both men and the senses, and that the ultimate mystical experience occurs when one is ‘quiet in mind & sensuality’. It was the ability to develop this skill and elevate the soul to God that the nuns were attempting to attain.

But what exactly was this ‘mystick way’? Using extracts from Harphius, Baker explained that ‘this waie is a divin waie, and is concealed and hidden from all human wisdom, and God immediatlie doth teach it to little ones, who are the humble and those that love him’.<sup>172</sup> Contrasting it with the scholastic way, which was the exercise of human understanding, Baker explained that it was the reverse of such. As a result:

Because God is the maister of all perfection, so that an ignorant layman, or a sillie olde woman, if she be drawn and do walke by this waie, maie within a shorte time attaine to a greater experimentall knowledge of God and of true vertues, and of all other such like things concerning the salvation or good of the soule, then all the doctors of the worlde can comme to know by their natural wisdom or by their learning gotten by studdie or industrie.<sup>173</sup>

‘Mistick theologie (or divinitie)’ cast away all signs of worldliness such as external prayer, calling to mind of sin, thinking of hell, death or judgement, and instead allowed the unhindered soul to ascend towards God to attain perfection. This hidden wisdom of ‘mistick theology’ was ‘written onlie in the hearte’, which could be attained by even the simple and uneducated by attending the ‘divin schoole wherein it is taught’. This divine school was the exercise of prayer and mortification, which preceded receiving wisdom and understanding ‘by amorous affections and influxes into God’.<sup>174</sup> For Baker mystical theology was characteristically anti-intellectual. It was the removal of all outer forms and distractions before the soul’s journey into God to achieve perfection. This vigorous anti-scholasticism can be seen in Baker’s *Collections out of divers authors*. In it he provided an extract from the Carthusian Prior Petrus Blomevenna, who produced the Latin version of Harphius’s *Theologia Mystica*. The section of Blomevenna’s text Baker reproduced highlighted the need to keep knowledge of the ‘mysticke way’ among true believers. Taking direct authority from Pseudo-Dionysius, Blomevenna reminded the reader that ‘mistick matters’ should not be heard or read by the ‘unexperte or unskillfull’ or those that were ‘prowde of their philosophie and of their learning gotten by studdie’ that ‘with their spitefull dogged teeth do

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<sup>172</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Collections I-III and The Twelve Mortifications of Harphius* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2004), pp. 11-12.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

rend and tear all they do not understande'.<sup>175</sup> 'Mistick matters' then, according to Blomevenna and by extension Baker, could only be understood by experience of them personally, of which the fiercest critics had none.<sup>176</sup> Experience itself, in Baker's own words, 'alone is the teacher of mystick matters'.<sup>177</sup>

Baker believed that contemplation consisted of what were termed 'intellectuall or spirituall operations', both of which have some level of 'misticknes' to them.<sup>178</sup> These operations were summarised into two different categories; the active and the passive. The active operation consisted of prayer and meditations the individual used to move towards God, while the passive operation was the movement of God in the soul, where God is the active agent, rather than the individual.<sup>179</sup> Baker also termed these the 'scholastick' and 'mistick' contemplations. The scholastic was the result of meditations, 'where the party hath discoursed upon a matter to the end to raise some good affection or affections'.<sup>180</sup> The 'mistick' contemplation was an altogether higher level of experience where the soul 'without the need or helpe of discourse, doth some way immediately exercise her will towards God'.<sup>181</sup> Because contemplation itself was 'to see or looke on a thinge cleerly & readily' with a 'mentall sight', the ultimate goal was to wait for God to 'present himselfe unto the soule' and contemplate God 'more cleerly & evidently & more distinctly in this passive'.<sup>182</sup> A confused knowledge of God in the lower forms of contemplation was replaced by one of clarity in the higher.

It was also only the good Christian who had access to the 'experimental sight & taste of God in his soul'. It was to be found in a part of the soul that, 'as the misticks say', was 'without & above sense', where no created thing could reach. It was God alone that had access to this portion of the soul, 'keepinge a key for his entry thither'.<sup>183</sup> Baker contrasted this with the 'philosophicall' contemplation of the heathen philosophers who, rather than focusing on the 'perfection of his soule in the love of God' in Christian contemplation, focused on nothing but knowledge, fame and learning. To these ranks of 'philosophicall contemplators' was added 'Christian learned men' who spent too much time studying philosophy and divinity, concerned with earthly knowledge and 'temporall commodities'

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-106.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>177</sup> Clark (ed.), *Discretion*, p. 1.

<sup>178</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Directions for Contemplation: Book G* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2000), pp. 5, 39.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp. 7, 10.

<sup>183</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book F*, p. 50.

rather than raising themselves to God.<sup>184</sup> The passive and pure ‘mistic’ contemplation where the Christian rejects all worldly knowledge, images and distractions, and instead waited passively for the movements of God in the soul, was the way to perfection. This ‘in most of the misticke authors is termed the mistic union, and it is the highest union of this life’.<sup>185</sup> Union and passive contemplation were the same thing, a state of being where God both presents himself and works within the soul.<sup>186</sup> None of this was, of course, perfect contemplation or knowledge of God, which was only attainable in heaven, and while on earth ‘we see now by a glasse in a darke sort, but then face to face’.<sup>187</sup> Conforming to the apophatic tradition that traced back to the *Theologia Mystica* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Baker confirmed that even in this mystic contemplation the ‘unsearcheable or bottomelesse essence’ of God could not be known, because God is nothing attributable, being an ‘eternall nothinge’ exceeding and above all ‘discourse & consideration’.<sup>188</sup>

The Cambrai nuns were aiming for the closest and most intimate experience of God possible in this life. Passive mystical contemplation was the goal, and books of mystical theology by writers that Baker termed mysticks would aid them in this path. Yet even these writers, which Baker surely classed as the greatest and most important, were not to be elevated too highly:

All the mystick masters in the world are not able to teach a man those internall prayers that are exercised in spirit [...] God is termed to be the master of the schole of perfect prayer & mystick theology. Other sciences may be taught by man, but this cannot. Thus write all mystick divines, & their sayings herein are most plainly true’.<sup>189</sup>

In Baker’s view God was to be considered the ultimate mystick. What the rest of this chapter will seek to show is that Baker was not only concerned with mysticks of the past, but also with inspiring new mysticks among the nuns at Cambrai. Through a detailed analysis of the reading lists, library catalogues and the spiritual guides Baker constructed, we will see he intended the nuns to consider themselves as mysticks and build upon his pre-existing canon.

### **Baker’s Mysticks: Characteristics and Aims**

Understanding exactly what Baker meant when he discussed mysticks requires an exploration of the variety of ways the term was used across his works. In one telling passage, Baker explained his understanding of his role. ‘Who by reading of Aristotle’, he

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<sup>184</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book G*, p. 11.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>186</sup> Clark (ed.), *Doubts and Calls*, p. 145.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>188</sup> Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, p. 9.

<sup>189</sup> Clark (ed.), *Doubts and Calls*, p. 28.

asked, 'comes to be a philosopher, if he have not besides some liveinge expositor, that can & will at large explicate the doctrine of Aristotle to the scholer, who thereby commeth to understand very well that which otherwise he could have made nothing of?'.<sup>190</sup> Simply reading Aristotle did not instantly make the reader a philosopher, nor guarantee his writings would be understood, but rather by reading further books and seeking the advice of a living expert, the reader could then be said to understand the contents. Much the same applied to becoming a mystick. Simply reading the texts was not enough, especially as published works on mystical theology often withheld contents that would appear scandalous, and thus the reader needed more. Baker's role was to supply 'what other writers could not prudentlie doe in their public writings', because these works were 'absolutelie necessaries to be knowne & practised by those that would be truly spirituall'.<sup>191</sup> Just as the scholar needed exposition to understand Aristotle and become a philosopher, the nuns needed Baker's exposition to become mysticks.

Baker gave several surprisingly detailed descriptions of what a mystick believed. Firstly, they did not attribute a 'quiet aspect to God' like many 'scholasticks', but rather argued that an 'apprehension of Him according to faith' was the true goal.<sup>192</sup> The mystick was one who spent their life trying to go beyond the 'Confused & general Knowledge of Him that our faith ministreth' and instead through the elevation of the will attempted to experience God without attributing any human constraints.<sup>193</sup> Elsewhere, Baker described exactly who should be included under this label:

Contemplative writers & books are also termed mysticks, in regard that the ways which they teach & the matters which they handle are mystick; that is to say, secret & hidden from the knowledg & understanding of sensuall men, being about matters that sense cannot comprehend, much lesse well expresse in sensible words; & they are learnt & understood only by experience.<sup>194</sup>

A mystick was a writer who undertook contemplation, had experiences of God beyond human senses, and wrote about their experiences. They dealt with the secret and hidden knowledge of God that could be found through the practice of mystical theology. But the most interesting part of Baker's definition of a mystick is in his understanding of the role of experience. Mysticks could only be 'learnt & understood' by experience, presumably by those who had also attained mystical union. Once one had experienced such, the writings of previous mysticks would become intelligible. If experience was 'alone the teacher of mystick matters', Baker's doctrine can be considered much more controversial than

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<sup>190</sup> Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, p. 62.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Clark (ed.), *Secretum*, p. 6.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Clark (ed.), *Doubts and Calls*, p. 37.

previously considered.<sup>195</sup> Mysticks were those that had experienced mystical union with God beyond all sense and knowledge. The only way to truly understand the writings of these mysticks was by experience of similar mystical union, becoming a mystick in the process.

Mysticks were split into two distinct groups. The first were those that used their writings to teach the ‘mystick way’ and provide proper instruction to attaining the end of mystick union. The other described the mystick union itself, ‘declaring what it is, or how or in what manner, or in what circumstance, the same is done’. Baker placed himself in the first of these two groups, describing it as ‘easier and more profitable’.<sup>196</sup> His role for the Cambrai nuns was to provide instruction in the ‘mystick way’, to produce exposition on the writings of previous mysticks and guide them towards mystical union. Baker was preparing the nuns to become mysticks themselves, to experience the path of contemplation and contribute their own experiences to the growing canon of mystick texts.<sup>197</sup> If only mysticks that had personal experience in this way could understand previous mystical writings, then Baker, as we will see later in defences written of him, should also be considered as part of this group, or a mystick himself. For, in his own words, the aim of those at Cambrai was to ‘find out our own art & both practise it our-selves & impart it to our religious brethren & sisters, [...] the art of a true spirituall & contemplative life’.<sup>198</sup>

If Baker and the nuns were mysticks, then they had to abide by the same precautions their predecessors had adhered to. Firstly was the need to take caution in making their writings public. For ‘scholastics in these dayes, who are so rigid in censuring the writings of misticks’ had ensured that ‘hardly dare any of those misticks sette out any thinge’. So little had been written on mystical theology because of this, and many works had been completely suppressed.<sup>199</sup> ‘Mystick writers’ were to write warily, according to Baker, as many ‘schole-divines’ seemed to ‘deprave that which they do not understand’.<sup>200</sup> They should temper themselves when they write about what they have experienced, because if they wrote truthfully, many would view it as ‘meere follies or dreames, and without reason’.<sup>201</sup> Because many mysticks had suffered from this, Baker questioned whether the works of such authors would ever be suitable for publishing, as he himself explicitly stated his own works were not. Because many writers, especially Pseudo-Dionysius, had repeatedly stated that works of mystical contemplation were not suitable for the majority,

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<sup>195</sup> Clark (ed.), *Discretion*, p. 1.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> For a detailed account of the nuns moving ‘from reader to writer’ and their attitudes to spiritual reading leading to mystical union, see Wolfe, ‘Reading Bells and Loose Papers’, pp. 142-48.

<sup>198</sup> Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, p. 68.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>200</sup> Clark (ed.), *Discretion*, p. 1.

<sup>201</sup> Clark (ed.), *Collections I-III and The Twelve Mortifications of Harphius*, p. 82.

Baker commented that ‘a question it may be, whether they be fit at all to be Printed & published or no’.<sup>202</sup>

His labelling of writers as mysticks is not to say that he understood these writers to have used similar terminology, or expressed similar experiences. Consequently Baker attributed the label of mystick to a wide number of writers who may have contradicted each other. In *Secretum* Baker dealt with this problem directly. Many mysticks in the ‘Expressement of the Spirituall Course they have run’, may well seem to disagree. The explanation Baker gave for this is a simple one. Because mystical experiences could hardly be set down in sensible or proper words, each mystick used terms that they saw as best fit for the purpose. Each wrote in their own manner and while to the unexperienced this might seem like conflict, each mystick does simply ‘handle the same Matter in Different terms’. As long as the soul is united to the body, it is limited by bodily senses, and thus cannot accurately describe the experiences it has felt.<sup>203</sup> Baker’s construction of a canon of mystick writers was secured, and differences explained away. Even writers that contradicted each other were excused due to the restrictions of the written word, the limitations of the human soul to describe accurately what is beyond words, and the variation between the manners and contexts of the writers in the canon.

Baker was also acutely aware of the limitations of the source material he engaged with. If mystick writers used different terms to describe the same process, it is entirely plausible that this was due to the fact that their works were largely never printed. After being copied down in many different hands, these differences in phrase may be errors in the processes of translation and transcription. Due to being written by hand, there were ‘many faults & Errors in such Copyings & Transcribings’ and therefore readers of these works should not ‘trouble our heads about it’.<sup>204</sup> For those that could not forget these differences in phrase, Baker provided a gloss at the end of *Secretum* of ‘those Names & Terms as I have met with in Books’. Even then the reader was cautioned to understand that there were ‘an infinite number’ of other names besides those listed. The list included ‘Mysticall Departure’, ‘Mystical Silence’, ‘Mystick Suspension’, ‘Mystick Quietness’, ‘Mystick Drunkenesse’, ‘Mystick Kisse’, ‘Mystick Touch’, ‘Mystick Embracement’, ‘Mystick Speaking’, and ‘Mystick Hearing’, as well as the dominant ‘Mystick Union’.<sup>205</sup> Clearly Baker’s canon of mysticks was rich in its variety of language and substance, requiring the skills of exposition by someone like himself to be truly understood.

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<sup>202</sup> Clark (ed.), *Secretum*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., pp. 261-62.

## Baker's Mysticks: Manuscripts and Texts

In order to aid the Cambrai nuns with their mystical experiences Baker generated various reading lists to give wider context to their inner experiences. In *Book F* he advised that:

You have in this howse bookes that are proper for all estates in a spiritual life, as for beginners, profifers, & perfect soules, & about contemplations, desolations, discretion of spirits, directions for the time of health, & for the time of sicknes, for livinge & dieinge, & one that tends towards perfection. I wish that she know of these bookes, & places, & reade them in their times, yea & before she be come to the practise of them; that so when the time shall come for the practise, she may the better understand her owne case, & not be in a wood or darkenes.<sup>206</sup>

Baker wanted to provide works which could help each nun understand her 'owne case'. The nuns were advised to read works of past mysticks and situate their own experiences within the context of these accounts. Reading brought reassurance that their mystical experiences were valid and orthodox and provided comfort to the nuns by detailing every stage and difficulty of the contemplative life. Through reading the individual nun could contextualise her own experiences and relate them to the wider mystical canon of texts.

Through these reading lists we see exactly which writers Baker understood to be mysticks, and we should take note that his own works were often integrated into these lists, suggesting that he saw himself as part of this canon. He likely took inspiration from Blosius, one of his main sources, who had previously made extensive use of authors in a similar way, and also composed similar 'affective aspirations' to those that featured in the works of Baker.<sup>207</sup> In *Alphabet* Baker described the soul of each nun as a tabula rasa, or a 'plain smooth table' which needed to be imprinted with 'good exercises'.<sup>208</sup> The final result of spiritual reading was when a nun became a passive reader, or listener 'of a text inscribed internally'.<sup>209</sup> To this end Baker allowed each nun to use certain exercises or works 'as her present state requireth'. If she was a 'raw and ignorant' soul that had just started her journey he recommended a substantial list of twenty-three works, including Harphius, Blosius, Tauler and Walter Hilton.<sup>210</sup> Most of the twenty-three works were his own, including *Books D, F, G, H* as well as *The Anchor of the Spirit*. The beginner on the mystical path was clearly expected to rely more on Baker's explanation and exposition of mystical texts, rather than reading the texts directly. Once they felt confident, they could then move onto the 'divers

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<sup>206</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book F*, p. 51.

<sup>207</sup> See J. T. Rhodes, 'Dom Augustine Baker's Reading Lists', *The Downside Review*, Vol. 111 (1993), pp. 157-73, p. 157.

<sup>208</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Alphabet and Order* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2001), p. 38.

<sup>209</sup> Wolfe, 'Reading Bells and Loose Papers', p. 142.

<sup>210</sup> Clark (ed.), *Alphabet and Order*, p. 39. Harphius, Tauler and others are labelled 'Mystick authors' in Clark (ed.), *Secretum*, p. 51.



other good books there are in the house'.<sup>211</sup> These included Louis of Granada, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas à Kempis, Teresa of Avila, and William Peryn.<sup>212</sup>

The most substantial reading list can be found at the end of *Book H*, labelled as a catalogue of books 'most helping towards contemplations'.<sup>213</sup> This list of another twenty-seven works represented a substantial body of texts that formed a definitive mystick canon. It included writers featured in *Alphabet* as discussed above, while also listing works by Luis de la Puente, Gaspar de Loarte, Benet of Canfield, Francis de Sales, Antonio de Molina, Richard Whytford, Constantin de Barbanson and Richard Rolle. Clearly the canon of mysticks was substantial and extensive. One manuscript of *Book F* featured a similar reading list and noted which nuns were currently reading which books, allowing a glimpse into their reading habits. Thus we know that *The Love of God* by Louis of Granada existed in two copies, one currently with 'Dame Agnes', and another with 'Sister Martha', the latter of whom also had a copy of the *Mental Prayer* of Antonio de Molina and a work entitled *Spirituell Doctrin*.<sup>214</sup> Dame Gertrude More was also in possession of a 'little manuscript intituled: Certain Brief Instructs and Considerations'. The communal aspect of the library was also highlighted, as the catalogue noted that Dame Potentiana had translated the *Entertainments* of Francis de Sales, while Baker himself had undertaken translations of six books of Tauler, featuring some extracts from Henry Suso, as well as transcribing Placidus Gascoigne's translation of *Interior Abnegation*.<sup>215</sup> Not only were the nuns reading and producing their own texts, many were intimately involved in translating other works of contemplation. Saints' lives were also plentiful, including those of Catherine of Siena, Thomas More, and Francis of Assisi. Works in French included Mechtilde of Hackeborn, John of the Cross and John Justus of Landsberg (Lanspergius).<sup>216</sup> Highly visible were the works of what Baker referred to as 'Speciall Soules', being religious women such as Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila, who represented the fact that God often called women with 'Extraordinary Favours, as we read in the Stories of their Lives'. The nuns would have taken special interest in these works as examples of women who, like themselves, were called to God in a variety of ways and means.<sup>217</sup>

Baker's mysticks were wide ranging and highly diverse in origin. What is clear is that the nuns under his supervision had a vast resource of books to hand, and were using

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<sup>211</sup> Clark (ed.), *Alphabet and Order*, p. 40.

<sup>212</sup> See Rhodes, 'Dom Augustine Baker's Reading Lists'.

<sup>213</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book H*, p. 79.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-85.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>217</sup> Clark (ed.), *Secretum*, p. 13.

them often. The nuns were required to keep lists of the library's holdings to be examined periodically by the Congregation to ensure the works were suitable, and although the library was kept under lock and key, they could borrow books and keep them in their cells if they left a note explaining such.<sup>218</sup> Small extracts from other authors also featured periodically in Baker's own works, including Rolle and Canfield in *The Anchor of the Spirit*, and the *Cloud of Unknowing* and Angela of Foligno in *Secretum*. When reading Baker's exposition of these works the nuns gained experience in reading the original works themselves, suggesting again that Baker's works were intended to transform the inexperienced beginner into the experienced mystick who would continue on to read the originals. This was encouraged via some of Baker's most important works, three books of extracts, or *Collections I-III*, which featured portions of the works of Harphius, Barbanson, Gregory the Great, Scupoli, Ruysbroeck, Canfield, and Blosius.<sup>219</sup> Such compilation manuscripts would no doubt have been indispensable to the nuns.

Yet as argued above, the nuns themselves were considered to be continuing the work of these mystick authors, and therefore were considered mysticks themselves. The greatest examples of nuns that had undertaken the journey to mystical union were undoubtedly Gertrude More and Catherine Gascoigne, both of whom had accounts of their lives written down, as well as recordings of their mystical experiences.<sup>220</sup> Evidence of Benedictine nuns as mysticks comes from the library catalogue contained in Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 4058. This library catalogue was from the Benedictine nuns of the Paris convent, which was founded in 1651 and became a centre of 'Bakerism'.<sup>221</sup> Alongside the works of Baker (some in his own hand, but most copied out by a Sister Hilda) and those of other mysticks, were the works of various Benedictine nuns.<sup>222</sup> Two books of *Confessions* by Gertrude More, two books of writing by Catherine Gascoigne, collections from the writings of Justina Gascoigne, and eight books by Clementia Cary are all listed together on one page.<sup>223</sup> Also listed elsewhere are collections of writings by nuns including Madelene Cary, Mary Watson,

<sup>218</sup> Wolfe, 'Reading Bells and Loose Papers', p. 137.

<sup>219</sup> Clark (ed.), *Collections I-III and The Twelve Mortifications of Harphius*.

<sup>220</sup> See Ben Wekking (ed.), *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2002); John Clark (ed.), *Confessiones Amantis: The Spiritual Exercises of the most Vertuous and Religious Dame Gertrude More* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2007); John Clark (ed.), *Five Treatises; The Life and Death of Dame Margaret Gascoigne; Treatise of Confession* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2006); John Clark (ed.), *Letters and Translations from Thomas à Kempis in the Lille Archives and elsewhere; The Devotions of Dame Margaret Gascoigne* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2007). Gertrude More was often attributed the name of 'Dame Trutha', a conscious identification with Gertrude of Helfta, see Victoria Van Hyning, 'Augustine Baker: Discerning the "Call" and Fashioning Dead Disciples', in Clare Copeland and Jan Machielsen (eds.), *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 143-68, p. 156.

<sup>221</sup> Lunn, 'Augustine Baker (1575 – 1641) and the English Mystical Tradition', p. 269.

<sup>222</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 4058, fol. 251.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 31<sup>v</sup>.

Mary Tempest, Bridgit More, Scholastica Hodson, and Eugenia Houghton.<sup>224</sup> If all these works were understood to contain, as those of Gertrude More did, ‘actes of devotion or matter for exercise of mentall prayer’, then it is clear that works by these nuns would be considered equally worthy as writings of mysticks.<sup>225</sup> If inexperienced nuns were looking for inspiration, they would have to look no further than the lives of Gertrude More, Margaret Gascoigne and Francis Gascoigne, listed alongside lives of Tauler and Suso.<sup>226</sup> Guidance could also be found in works listed as being by Julian of Norwich and Bridget of Sweden, as well as the *Ruine of Self Love and the Building of Divine Love* by Jeanne de Cambry.<sup>227</sup> One book featured the work of Richard Rolle concerning temptation ‘translated out of old English into newer’ bound up with the *Devotions* of Margaret Gascoigne, showing how old and new mysticks were considered equally important in aiding the nuns’ understanding of their contemplative experiences.<sup>228</sup> If Gertrude More’s *Confessions* were written down ‘to benefit others of her experience’ then it can be assumed the writings of all the nuns were highly valued as insights into mystical experience.<sup>229</sup> The Benedictine nuns that followed Baker’s teachings were highly productive both textually and spiritually, and saw that reading and writing could satisfy their evolving personal and communal needs.<sup>230</sup>

### **Bakerists and Francis Hull**

Baker and the Cambrai nuns shared a very productive relationship. He valued the nuns as living mysticks who required his help in understanding and building upon past works of mystical theology. He aimed to guide them towards individualistic spiritual experiences of God that were beyond all knowledge and understanding. By translating and transcribing past works, Baker sought to inspire the nuns towards mystical union, and to record their experiences for posterity. He had built a canon of mystick authors and wanted the nuns to contribute towards its survival. Yet the relationship between Baker and the nuns came under severe pressure in the early 1630s. Rumours had circulated that Baker was ‘Extravagant in his praier; Crying out aloud, and Unseemly, and Made faces, and the like; and that he loved his own Ease, and Under pretence of Contemplation, Lived as he pleased himselfe’.<sup>231</sup> Tensions developed as a result of Francis Hull’s arrival as confessor to the convent in 1629. Hull preferred the nuns to have a more prescriptive and structured course of religious

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., fol. 32.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., fol. 122.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., fol. 143.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., fol. 206<sup>v</sup>. See also Elisabeth Dutton, ‘The Seventeenth-Century Manuscript Tradition and the Influence of Augustine Baker’, in Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 127-38.

<sup>228</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 4058, fol. 228<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>229</sup> Norman, ‘Dame Gertrude More and the English Mystical Tradition’, p. 208.

<sup>230</sup> Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe*, p. 145.

<sup>231</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 219<sup>r</sup>.

direction, which came into direct conflict with Baker's attitude of allowing each nun to develop her own personal spiritual journey.<sup>232</sup> Baker's popularity among those now identified as 'Bakerists' caused problems for Hull, who undoubtedly felt surplus to requirements. As Victoria Van Hyning has noted, it must also have caused problems for those nuns that 'were either incapable of or uninterested in the prayer methods he [Baker] taught'.<sup>233</sup> If mystical experience was granted only to a select few, then the nuns that had become mysticks by experience were separated from their fellow nuns by this defining ability. As a result accusations of elitism and favouritism soon followed.

Baker pre-empted this in his own *Apologie*, written in 1629. In it he argued that anyone seeking to judge him should not do so by any one specific passage of his work, but rather by reading them all. He explained that an idea which seemed brief or passed over may very well have been written about in greater detail in another work that would satisfy the critic.<sup>234</sup> Rather than be made public, his works were for 'a few certeine private persons' to whom he had provided 'larger discourses by word of mouth' when they did not understand the meanings of certain words. Any critic who read his works should therefore be reassured that the nuns 'know my meaning better then perhaps the words as they are written doe precisely signifie'. Only certain nuns would also be suitable, those 'whose consciences & states of soules I have beene very privie unto [...] not perhaps so proper for others'.<sup>235</sup> After complaining that 'scholasticks' (i.e. Hull) wanted to censure the writings of 'misticks' to the point that they hardly dare write anything, Baker also noted that 'if one of those misticks doe trippe in a tearme that perhaps little or nothings imporeth, they crie out as if the whole world were like to be corrupted & undone by it'.<sup>236</sup> Not only did Baker use the term mystick in regards to himself, as one whose words were being attacked, but also suggested that in censuring him his enemies are also preventing some mysticks (i.e. certain Cambrai nuns) from writing their experiences down. The approbations to his works in 1629 and 1630 suggest that many agreed with him. Rudesind Barlow declared *Book G* to contain a summary of what was written by the 'best misticke authors' on the subject, and was to be read repeatedly.<sup>237</sup> Leander de Sancto Martino, Prior at Douai, described *Secretum* as containing 'many perfect points of Mysticall Divinity' and elsewhere affirmed that *Books A, B, C, D, The Alphabet, and Doubts and Calls* contained the 'mystick waies of God' and were suitable

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<sup>232</sup> Clark, 'Augustine Baker, O.S.B: Towards a Re-Assessment', p. 219.

<sup>233</sup> Hyning, 'Augustine Baker: Discerning the "Call" and Fashioning Dead Disciples', p. 153.

<sup>234</sup> Clark (ed.), *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, p. 81.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>237</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book G*. p. 1.

‘especially for the use of our Dames’.<sup>238</sup> Yet this came with a warning in the form of the example of Teresa of Avila, who had ‘give way to univerrall communication of her interior to divers learned men, & commended it to all her daughters’ and was plagued in later life by those that had deemed it necessary to ‘vent forth their disgusts, with harm to themselves & the Community’.<sup>239</sup> Baker’s doctrines could remain, but could not be allowed to leave the shelter and security of the interpretations the Benedictines had placed on them.

Yet his apology proved more controversial than placating. In 1632 Baker, at the request of Abbess Catherine Gascoigne, produced a new translation and commentary on the Benedictine *Rule*, which featured another defence of his doctrines against ‘back-biters’ and ‘false brethren’ who were disturbing the community.<sup>240</sup> As a result, the arguments between Baker and Hull erupted. Hull accused Baker of undermining clerical authority by empowering women and creating a sub faction of personal followers.<sup>241</sup> He submitted his objections to Sigebert Bagshaw, then President of the Congregation, and these objections reveal something of the tensions present at Cambrai as a result of Baker’s doctrines. According to Hull, Baker had created a ‘spirituall Confederacie, league, or freindship’ that had ‘Bookes and Doctrins, different from the rest’. Because these were not applicable, or indeed accessible, to the other nuns, this had bred ‘partialitie, disaffections, and murmurs’.<sup>242</sup> The only solution was to have a confessor who was indifferent to all. Gertrude More’s reply to this accusation highlighted that Hull had been suspicious of the nuns since his very arrival, and insisted that no private confederacies existed.<sup>243</sup> Baker confirmed this in his own reply, insisting that the nuns had largely ‘estranged themselves’ from him. He also asked why anyone but his followers would have his books, for they were of little use to anyone else. By order of his superiors all his books were kept in the common library, except three or four which were in the custody of the Abbess.<sup>244</sup> In less subtle passages Baker accused Hull of wishing to take the place of the Abbess in running the house, whereby he could set up a ‘monarchicall Authoritie and government’ to make himself ‘Emperour and Pope’ as ruler of both the nuns’ temporality and spirituality.<sup>245</sup> Apparently it was Hull’s tyranny which was upsetting the community, rather than Baker’s doctrines. This was an argument Baker, More

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<sup>238</sup> Clark (ed.), *Secretum*, p. 1; John Clark (ed.), *A Spirituall Treatise... Called A.B.C.* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2001), pp. 1, 6.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>240</sup> Quoted in Hynning, ‘Augustine Baker: Discerning the “Call” and Fashioning Dead Disciples’, p. 153.

<sup>241</sup> Clark refers to these claims as ‘groundless’ in his ‘Augustine Baker, O.S.B: Towards a Re-Assessment’, p. 218.

<sup>242</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. C. 460, fols. 216-17. Selections from this manuscript can be found in Wekking (ed.), *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More*.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 223.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 233-35.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 249- 51.

and Gascoigne had made almost immediately upon hearing Hull had submitted his complaints, even before seeing the exact nature of them. Jointly penned by all three, their letter to the President of the Congregation insisted that the house was peaceful on Hull's arrival, with Baker removing himself as much as possible, and as a result the nuns took to their new confessor with total obedience 'as if they had ben [sic] but little children'.<sup>246</sup> Hull had disrupted this by slandering Baker in front of the nuns in an attempt to 'roote out of their hearts and the hearts of others of the house the spirit and doctrin I had planted in them'.<sup>247</sup> He had tried to replace it with an 'austere and terrible doctrin' which was void of life and full of heaviness and sadness, causing many to turn to Baker's doctrines to raise them out of such misery.<sup>248</sup> More condemned Hull's way by stating that she preferred to follow 'the waie of love, not of feare'.<sup>249</sup>

The episode highlights the differing attitudes toward spiritual authority. Baker believed his doctrines to be peaceful, and although they stressed inner spirituality, his followers were model members of the house at Cambrai. They wanted nothing more than to be allowed to practice his doctrines in peace while submitting themselves in all other respects to the expectations of the Abbess and the authority of their confessor. This would explain why Gascoigne's own defence of Baker insisted that following mystical theology and Baker's doctrines did not hinder her from 'due performance of her other duties and Obligations, and external Obediences [...] or disesteem of her superiors, their ordinations and exactions'.<sup>250</sup> To Baker and the Bakerists, Hull was evidence of the scholastics who could never understand mystical theology and feared what they could not themselves experience. Hull's complaint can be seen to have a level of validity however, for nuns becoming mysticks separated them from those who had no experience of such. If Baker's main attention was given to those nuns who showed promise to this end, then this necessarily created some form of subgroup, regardless of his intentions. Hull's other objections made this clear. As well as the 'spirituall Confederacie', Baker gave the nuns too much liberty by encouraging them to think of themselves as advancing towards perfection, told them to only listen to those they considered contemplatives, spread errors among unwitting novices, advised them not to discuss internal experiences during confession, and cautioned them to hide his books. Ultimately Hull believed Baker was guilty of encouraging the 'simple soules of women' to apply the principles of mystical theology 'as though they

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., fol. 10.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., fol. 20.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., fols. 48-59.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., fol. 195.

<sup>250</sup> Julia Bolton Holloway (ed.), *'Colections' by an English Nun in Exile* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2006), pp. 385-86.

understoodde [sic] them'.<sup>251</sup> By this the authority of priests, confessors and superiors was diminished, and 'more given to women'.<sup>252</sup>

Despite his works being judged orthodox in 1633, both Baker and Hull were removed from Cambrai to ensure that peace was maintained. Baker returned to Douai, very rarely leaving his chamber, and was resigned to 'giving himself wholly to an intern conversation with God'.<sup>253</sup> After a while however 'his light began to shine forth and to enlighten all those who repaired to him' and he soon became popular with many within the monastery and outside of it.<sup>254</sup> As a result many 'underhand dealers' became envious of those that had started to refer to themselves as Bakerists.<sup>255</sup> Even while having virtually no communication with the nuns, new confessors at Cambrai still complained of his influence and many at Douai took exception to his teaching that internal methods of prayer should not be subject to external interference.<sup>256</sup> After another controversy at Douai concerning criticism of Rudesind Barlow, Baker was sent to England in 1638. There he stayed with various families connected to Cambrai and Douai, dodging the authorities hunting out Catholic priests. Although he died in 1641, he was said to have spent his time in England in a 'wholly passive' contemplation. According to Prichard, he spent his final years in rest and peace, 'which peace both interior and exterior, mystick authors do require, for this highest contemplation'.<sup>257</sup> His death was recorded as being the final part of his contemplative life, and 'so his death was nothing else but a sweet and happy expiration in and to the same God, to enjoy a facial contemplation of him which before he had only by faith'. He died 'a true son of our most glorious Father, S. Benedict, patron and pattern of all true contemplatives'.<sup>258</sup>

### **Bakerists and Claude White**

Baker's works continued to prove controversial after his death. Many Benedictines valued his works as their rightful inheritance and promoted the case for Baker's canonisation by preserving his works in an attempt to begin a movement similar to that of Teresa of Avila's

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<sup>251</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. C. 460, fol. 435.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., fol. 502.

<sup>253</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fols. 222<sup>v</sup>-223<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., fol. 224<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., fols. 226<sup>r</sup>-227<sup>r</sup>. Salvin uses this term in a conversation with Baker. When Salvin challenged Hull he apparently denied opposing Baker's teaching, but rather some 'pretended practisers of it'. His doctrines were, Hull reportedly admitted, 'very good, holy and proper for contemplative persons, such as are fit to lead an internal life with God'.

<sup>256</sup> Clark, 'Augustine Baker, O.S.B: Towards a Re-Assessment', p. 219.

<sup>257</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 141<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., fol. 234<sup>r</sup>.

reform of the Carmelites.<sup>259</sup> Although ‘the fountain was removed’, Baker had given his disciples access to ‘living waters, which depended not on him or anything else but their own serious practice and the refreshing of the Holy Ghost’.<sup>260</sup> His concept of mystical theology and his canon of mysticks was thus taken out of his hands and inherited by his disciples, who struggled to maintain the legitimacy of his doctrines.<sup>261</sup> Whereas Baker had insisted that his doctrines were specifically for the nuns alone, the potential publication of his works by Serenus Cressy in 1657 began to cause concern among some Benedictines. If the publications went ahead unchecked and Baker’s work was later deemed unorthodox, the entire Benedictine congregation could be brought into disrepute.<sup>262</sup> As a result great pressure was placed on the nuns of Cambrai to submit their Baker manuscripts to Claude White, President of the English Benedictine Congregation, in 1655.

As early as 1653 more defences of Baker’s doctrines had been produced. An *Apologie* written by Francis Gascoigne defended ‘Father Baker’s Way’ as being that of many ‘mysticke authors’ who spoke of it as a distinct way of life.<sup>263</sup> The ‘science’ of the inner life Baker promoted was called ‘mysticke theologie’ and as well as the ‘cheef master of mystike divines’, who was Pseudo-Dionysius, others in this category included Augustine of Hippo, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Suso, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Teresa of Avila, Gertrude of Helfta, Harphius, Gerson, and Barbenson.<sup>264</sup> After a substantial number of other references to mystical theology and mysticks, Gascoigne made his most important point: that Baker should be considered ‘among those who are tearmed mystike writers, that is, who write of mystike divinity’.<sup>265</sup> Because of this Gascoigne supported the creation of a ‘compendium or summary’ of Baker’s doctrines and those he took from other authors.<sup>266</sup> Christina Brent wrote a similar defence of Baker. She argued that ‘Father Baker’s way’ and the ‘mysticke way’ were one and the same, and Baker had only written on a topic that was supported by a substantial canon of mysticks. There was nothing in his works which could not be found in that of Tauler, Harphius, or Hilton, and the nuns had initially been mistaken

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<sup>259</sup> Lunn, ‘Augustine Baker (1575 – 1641) and the English Mystical Tradition’, p. 271.

<sup>260</sup> Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1775, fol. 234<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>261</sup> See Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe*, ch. 5.

<sup>262</sup> Walker, *Spiritual Property*, p. 250.

<sup>263</sup> John Clark (ed.), *Francis Gascoigne: An Apologie for myself about Fr. Baker’s Doctrine; Abbess Christina Brent: Discourse concerning Father Baker’s Doctrine; Augustine Baker: Admittance; Bonilla; Ricerius* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-18.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.



in labelling it ‘Baker’s way’, for it was not a new manner of devotion, but a well-established tradition.<sup>267</sup>

In 1655 the crisis reached its climax and saw Abbess Catherine Gascoigne writing to Arthur Crowder, a fellow Benedictine living in London, for help and advice. Crowder had returned to England in the early 1630s and was well connected around London, where he was actively writing with another Benedictine, Thomas Vincent. By the 1650s they had set up a Chapel of the Rosary in London under the patronage of Robert Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan, due to the Royal Chapel at Somerset House being closed off to Catholics.<sup>268</sup> Together with Vincent he produced *Jesus, Maria, Joseph* (1657) which was published for the benefit ‘of the pious Rosarists’ and dedicated to Henrietta Maria.<sup>269</sup> The Queen seems to have had direct influence over the group, as Crowder and Vincent end their long and flattering dedication by identifying themselves as ‘the meanest of your Chaplains at the Head-Altar of your Holy Rosary’.<sup>270</sup> *The Dayly Exercise of the Devout Rosarists* (1657) was also published ‘for such as are members of the sacred Rosary’ and dedicated to Sir Henry Tichborne, suggesting the group had several highly connected members.<sup>271</sup>

Crowder’s main base of operations may not have been the house of Brudenell, but rather in the home of one of a colony of rich Dutch Catholic merchants, which was less likely to arouse suspicion. The place of publication for these works, labelled as Amsterdam, would thus more likely have been London itself.<sup>272</sup> It was from here that Crowder received letters from the nuns under the pseudonym of ‘Monsieur Vanderhaghen’. In one letter the Abbess told Crowder that White was trying to ‘purge the books that we might not feed upon poisonous doctrine’ and had warned the nuns that their continued resistance was an act of ‘absolut disobedience’.<sup>273</sup> White had called each nun individually to him and offered them a

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 97. Brent’s main concern in this defence was addressing the conflict between Baker and Hull, but as it was written at an unspecified time after the events, it is proof that Baker’s mystick canon continued to be defended.

<sup>268</sup> For more on ‘Confraternities of the Rosary’, see Anne Dillon, ‘Praying by Number: The Confraternity of the Rosary and the English Catholic Community, c. 1580- 1700’, *History*, Vol. 88, No. 291 (2003), pp. 451-71; idem., “‘To seek out some Comforts and Companions of his own kind and condition’: The Benedictine Rosary Confraternity and Chapel of Cardigan House, London’, in Lowell Gallagher (ed.), *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 272-308. For the rosary more generally, see Lisa McClain, ‘Using What’s at Hand: English Catholic Reinterpretations of the Rosary, 1559- 1642’, *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2003), pp. 161-76.

<sup>269</sup> Arthur Crowder and Thomas Vincent, *Jesus, Maria, Joseph, or, The devout pilgrim* (Amsterdam [London?], 1657), title page.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., sig. b1<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page).

<sup>271</sup> Arthur Crowder and Thomas Vincent, *The dayly exercise of the devout rosarists* (Amsterdam [London?], 1657), sig. a2<sup>r</sup> (incorrectly labelled as a4<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>272</sup> Hugh Connolly, ‘The Benedictine Chapel of the Rosary in London (circa 1650- 1681)’, *Downside Review*, Vol. 33 (1943), pp. 320-29, p. 325.

<sup>273</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl A.36, fol. 49<sup>r</sup>.

statement on a piece of paper with a simple yes or no answer required. The statement on the paper asked the nuns whether letters should be dispatched to Crowder, Paul Robinson and Augustine Conyers ordering them to surrender the Baker manuscripts to White.<sup>274</sup> When most of the nuns declined, White then refused to see or speak to those novices waiting to be professed, which would have dire monetary consequences if their dowries were lost. This caused much disruption within the convent and many of the nuns feared that if White gained the manuscripts he would ‘blot them’, causing ‘so great a prejudice to the bookes and so great an injury to all such of the congregation that do esteeme them’.<sup>275</sup> Gascoigne made it clear that this was an issue for the entire congregation, not only because Baker’s previously approved doctrines were under threat, but because of the proceedings of White against fellow Benedictines. Such a plea to Crowder was reiterated by Christina Brent, who also wrote to him wishing that White would ‘let the affair of the bookes rest according as we have humbly petitioned him’.<sup>276</sup> Letters to Conyers and Robinson were also sent by Gascoigne, both of which stressed the ‘narrow straites’ and ‘great straightes’ the nuns were suffering through.<sup>277</sup> Despite this, all three men feared many would side with White and recommended handing over the originals. Fortunately for the nuns this never came to pass as the issue was largely resolved with White’s death a few months later.<sup>278</sup>

Crowder was clearly one of the most influential Bakerists of the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>279</sup> His familiarity with the works of Baker would explain his and Vincent’s most vital work, *The Spiritual Conquest in Five Treatises* (1651) which was attached to the back of their translation of Lorenzo Scupoli’s *The Spiritual Conflict*.<sup>280</sup> The work was dedicated

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., fol. 56.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., fols. 49<sup>r</sup>- 49<sup>v</sup>. Crowder received a letter from two of these potential new nuns, Clare and Ursula Radclyffe, reassuring him of their desire and determination to profess (fol. 73).

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., fol. 53.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., fols. 45, 57.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., fols. 85, 89.

<sup>279</sup> Perhaps the greatest inheritor of Baker’s techniques and doctrines was Barbara Constable, who edited various works and produced guides for her fellow nuns and their priests. If anyone was truly Baker’s successor among the Benedictines, it was surely her. Much has been written about her as a result. See Heather Wolfe, ‘Dame Barbara Constable: Catholic Antiquarian, Advisor, and Closet Missionary’, in Corthell et al. (eds.), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, pp. 158-88; Jenna Lay, ‘An English Nun’s Authority: Early Modern Spiritual Controversy and the Manuscripts of Barbara Constable’, in Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen M. Mangion (eds.), *Gender, Catholicism, and Spirituality: Women and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 99–114; Laurence Lux-Sterritt, ‘Clerical Guidance and Lived Spirituality in Early Modern English Convents’, in Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Claire Sorin (eds.), *Spirit, Faith and Church: Women’s Experiences in the English-Speaking World, 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 51-78; Genelle Gertz, ‘Barbara Constable’s *Advice for Confessors* and the Tradition of Medieval Holy Women’, in Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly (eds.), *The English Convents in Exile, 1600- 1800: Communities, Culture and Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 123-38.

<sup>280</sup> This attribution is made by Geoffrey Scott in his ‘The Image of Augustine Baker’, in Woodward (ed.), *That Mysterious Man*, pp. 92- 122, p. 113. Scott’s chapter is an illuminating exploration of the

to William and Elizabeth Sheldon, complete with a portrait of the couple, whose children Catherine and Edward had become Benedictines. The most interesting part of the work was the fifth and final treatises, the ‘choycest Maxim’s of Mystical Divinity’. Described as ‘the choice flowers which we have gathered in the several gardens of sacred writers’ in the dedicatory epistle, this final treatise was the most substantial; equal if not longer in length than the first four epistles combined.<sup>281</sup> The treatise addressed all ‘Devout Contemplatives, walking in the way of heavenly Love, and aspiring to perfect Union with God’.<sup>282</sup> Showing much of the influence of Baker, Crowder and Vincent stressed that among ‘Mystical writers’ there were ‘general grounds and granted verities of solid Devotion and Sublime Contemplation’ to be found.<sup>283</sup> The work was written to show the general maxims of mystical authors, written in a ‘compendious and concise style, leaving many points rather insinuated than expressed, because our aym is only truth, substance, and solidity, which need no word-ornaments to make them amiable or intelligible’. These maxims, ‘nakedly, simply and briefly proposed’ would be easier to admit into the soul and more easily retained by the memory.<sup>284</sup> It was not for the scholar whose whole understanding was based on natural reason, for this was that supernatural light described by Pseudo-Dionysius which was above acts of reason.<sup>285</sup> The work asked the reader to ‘drown yourselves (O divine Contemplatives) in this Ocean; lose your selves in this abyss of the divinity; leave all that is material, sensible, intelligible, and look immediately upon the supernatural object of your faith’.<sup>286</sup> What followed was a comprehensive exploration of the canon of mystick authors, with most references going to Augustine, Bernard, and Castaniza’s *Spiritual Conflict*, although more are referenced in the aim of fortifying, comforting and clarifying faith through mystical theology. The work ended by suggesting the life of Teresa of Avila to those who still needed reassurance, and in a final note of resilience asked the soul to ‘let the world murmur; answer them all [...] my Vows and Promises stand & I am content to sign it with my blood: I will sooner dye than swerve from my well-setled Resolutions [...] Darkness, Desolation,

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visual representations of the Benedictines in print. See also his ‘Cloistered Images: Representations of English nuns, 1600–1800’, in Bowden and Kelly (eds.), *The English Convents in Exile*, pp. 191-210.

<sup>281</sup> The edition held at York Minster Library belonged to one ‘Elizabeth Okeover, 1658’. Whether this is the same Okeover whose medical manuscripts have survived, it is impossible to say, but certainly suggests a varied readership. See Richard Aspin, ‘Illustrations from the Wellcome Library: Who was Elizabeth Okeover?’ *Medical History*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2000), pp. 531-40.

<sup>282</sup> Arthur Crowder and Thomas Vincent, *The Spiritual Conquest in Five Treatises* (Paris, 1651), sig. K4<sup>r</sup>. Attached to Lorenzo Scupoli, *The Christian Pilgrime in his Spirituall Conflict and Conquest* (Paris, 1652).

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K6<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page). For the conflicts between Baker’s mystical theology and natural theology, see Geoffrey Scott, ‘Baker’s Critics’, in Scott (ed.), *Dom Augustine Baker*, pp. 179-92. The conflict between Restoration Anglicans and Serenus Cressy over superstition, rationality and tradition are explored extensively in chapter 4 below.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K7<sup>v</sup> (unpaginated page).

Death and Devill shall never make me change'.<sup>287</sup> These words were a battle cry to defend mystical theology, the fight for which was taken up by Serenus Cressy more publically in the Restoration.

## Conclusion

Augustine Baker laid the foundations for the evolution of the term mystick to mean an author who wrote about mystical theology. Baker constructed a canon of texts which not only drew on older works, but also endeavoured to include the contemporary writings of Cambrai nuns. But even within the confines of the Benedictine monasteries we see the start of a pattern which repeated itself across the seventeenth century in regards to mystical theology. Baker's teachings on inner spirituality and union with God were anti-scholastic and highly individualistic; the call of God in the soul was to be taken as an authority above any scholar or book. 'Mistick bookes, writings, & sayings' Baker informed the nuns 'do serve to animate or confirm one in his course, but [...] we are ever to observe & follow our owne way & call'.<sup>288</sup> The spiritual freedom Baker's doctrines gave the nuns cannot be understated. As this chapter has shown, they fought several long and difficult battles with their superiors, both during Baker's lifetime and afterwards, to maintain ownership of his teachings and legitimate their own experiences as mystical. To legitimize Baker's canon of mysticks was to maintain their own legitimacy as mysticks, and this fact explains why they persevered in keeping ownership of his manuscripts against successive challengers from within the Benedictine congregation.

Yet the episode against Claude White shows how concerned some Benedictines were with how these doctrines could be interpreted outside the safety of the monasteries. Perfection via union with God and inner ecstasies were doctrines which, as we will explore later, were not viewed as favourably in England as they were by the Bakerists. The publication of Baker's work in the form of *Sancta Sophia* in 1657 by Serenus Cressy seemed to confirm the more conservative Benedictines' worst fears. Church of England critics would rapidly smear the teachings as being the same as that of sectarians and jumped at the chance to tar all with the same brush. As we will see, the claim that Baker had given his followers 'living waters' which depended on nothing else by the 'refreshing of the Holy Ghost' as they strove towards perfection sounded all too similar to claims made by radical Puritans around the same time in England. It is to these radicals, and the uses of mystical theology in mid-seventeenth century England, that we now turn.

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>288</sup> Clark (ed.), *Book D*, p. 87.

## Chapter 2: Puritans, Antinomians and Mystical Divines

Three Jewels I wish I could have transported with me, from *Rome* into *England*, and our *Universities: School Divinity, Mystically Divinity, and Case-of-Conscience-Doctrine*: the Defect of which, hath rendred the Leaders of these wretched & leaden People, wretchedly deficient, and altogether sinking within themselves. They should make better and stronger use of their *strong Imagination*; as the *Mystically Divines* have taught, after these presentments of *School-Divinity*.<sup>289</sup>

Richard Carpenter assumed many different confessional stances during his lifetime. After a time at King's College, Cambridge, he converted to Catholicism in 1625. He joined the Benedictines at Douai in 1630, after which he travelled to Rome to be ordained in March 1635 and returned to England as a missionary. In England the chaplain of William Laud pressured him to recant and instead praise the ceremonies of the Church of England. After receiving a modest living in Sussex in 1638, he later submitted evidence against Laud to the parliamentary committee of religion in 1640. During the Civil Wars he travelled to Paris to become a Catholic once more, only to return to England and travel as an Independent preacher in the late 1640s. He converted to Catholicism one final time before his death, despite publishing a series of anti-Catholic works in the early years of the reign of Charles II.<sup>290</sup> Anthony Wood described him as an 'impudent fantastical man, that changed his mind with his cloathes, and [...] juggles and tricks in matters of Religion'.<sup>291</sup>

As the opening quote suggests, Carpenter had a special fondness for mystical theology. He described it as one of the three jewels of Catholicism, referencing '*Mystically Divines*' with a marginal note of '*Theologi Mystici*'. Carpenter's understanding of mystical theology becomes clear in his description of the role of the '*internall Senses*' to detect a '*Spiritually Thing*'. While the body had a limited understanding of the true essence of these spiritual things, the imagination could be used to 'Imagine that it sees, hears, smels, tastes, touches, *even absent Things*, and make them present many waies'.<sup>292</sup> In *The Anabaptist washt and washt* (1653) he cited a substantial number of sources including Augustine, Gregory the Great, Origen, Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Jean Gerson, Bonaventure, and Bernard

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<sup>289</sup> Richard Carpenter, *The Anabaptist washt and washt, and shrunk in the washing* (London, 1653), p. 379.

<sup>290</sup> William E. Burns, 'Carpenter, Richard (1604/5–1670?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4739>, accessed 4 Feb 2015]

<sup>291</sup> Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses. An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the most ancient and famous University of Oxford, from the fifteenth year of King Henry the Seventh, Dom. 1500, to the end of the year 1690. Representing the birth, fortune, preferment, and death of all those authors and prelates, the great accidents of their lives, and the fate and character of their writings. To which are added, the Fasti or Annals, of the said university, for the same time. The first volume, extending to the 16th. year of King Charles I. Dom. 1640* (London, 1691), pp. 439-40.

<sup>292</sup> Carpenter, *The Anabaptist washt and washt*, pp. 379-81.

of Clairvaux. Contemporary Protestant sources such as Jeremy Taylor and Daniel Featley, and Catholic writers Charles Borromeo and Robert Bellarmine also featured.<sup>293</sup> His reading habits seemed just as varied as his religious identity, and many of the mysticks he claimed had no influence in England formed a large core of his citations. This did not go unnoticed by Thomas Gataker who suggested in 1654 that Carpenter ‘*seemed not yet well washed from his Popish dregs [...] conceits and opinions*’.<sup>294</sup> His constantly shifting religious position made Gataker suspect Carpenter was writing works of Menippean satire, rather than serious religious controversy.<sup>295</sup>

It is unusual that Carpenter laments the lack of enthusiasm for mystical theology and the ‘mysticall divines’ in England. As this chapter will show, there was substantial interest in mystical theology in the early to mid-decades of the seventeenth century, especially in Puritan and antinomian circles. Even Gataker admitted that many ‘*Novellists*’ in England used it in their ‘absurd, immodest, irreligious and ridiculous Paterns and Instances’. Rather than gaining too little attention, Gataker argued that ‘of such stuff we have to much among us alreadie; which even the soberer sort of Popish Writers themselvs mislike; and we are wel content it rest where it is, wishing it rather exiled wholie from us’. Rather than a wider recognition of the works of mysticks, Gataker preferred them to remain the monopoly ‘of the *Romish Synagog*’.<sup>296</sup>

This chapter traces the influence of these mysticks in Puritan and antinomian thought to show how various groups adapted mystical theology to suit their own religious beliefs. ‘Puritan’ is of course a contested term, often used in the period with derogatory intent alongside similar phrases such as ‘precisians’, ‘saints’ and ‘scripture men’. Its use expressed a distaste for a singular way of life which was ascetic, regulated, and of a ‘precisianist strain’.<sup>297</sup> As Patrick Collinson has stressed, what made someone a ‘Puritan’ was often ‘in the eye of the beholder’, part of a process of ‘the re-definition of Calvinist

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<sup>293</sup> Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 26.

<sup>294</sup> Thomas Gataker, *A discours apologetical; wherein Lilies lewd and lowd lies in his Merlin or Pasqil for the yeer 1654. are cleerly laid open* (London, 1654), p. 65.

<sup>295</sup> See Alison Shell, ‘Multiple Conversion and the Menippean Self: the Case of Richard Carpenter’, in Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism*, pp. 154-97.

<sup>296</sup> Gataker, *A discours apologetical*, p. 67.

<sup>297</sup> Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), p. 1; Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 5. ‘Puritanism’ has been just a slippery to define, see Peter Lake, ‘Defining Puritanism- Again?’, in Francis J. Bremer (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), pp. 3-29.

“orthodoxy” as Puritanism by the Arminians’ in the early seventeenth century.<sup>298</sup> This chapter understands Puritanism as a cultural phenomenon which consisted of a number of shared traits such as sermon-gadding, fasting and conventicles, which were an addition to the practices of the national Church, rather than radically opposed to them.<sup>299</sup> Although many Puritans disagreed over specific issues, they nevertheless remained broadly within this ‘wider culture of Puritan religiosity’.<sup>300</sup> Taking London as an example, David Como and Peter Lake have argued for the ‘open-ended, more dynamic, more potentially fissiparous’ nature of Puritanism in which the ‘Calvinist consensus’ of the early seventeenth century argued for by Nicholas Tyacke was undermined from within, during intra-Puritan doctrinal debate, as well as the pressures of Arminianism from outside.<sup>301</sup> Randall J. Pederson's recent study argued for this ‘wider culture’ through the examples of John Downname, Francis Rous and Tobias Crisp, all of whom fashioned their own brands of Puritanism. Despite this, all three attended major universities, sought further Church reform, and concerned themselves with perceived social ills. They also agreed on significant theological issues such as predestination, assurance, justification, sanctification, and how to live a good Christian life. From these conclusions Pederson asserts that despite their differences they shared common influences and showed *unitas* within *diversitas*.<sup>302</sup> This wider culture has been characterized by Theodore Dwight Bozeman as an introspective and personal form of *praxis pietatis*,

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<sup>298</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘A Comment Concerning the Name Puritan’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1980), pp. 483-88, p. 487. For criticism of the ‘Anglican vs Puritan’ binary opposition, see Collinson, ‘The Fog in the Channel Clears: The Rediscovery of the Continental Dimension to the British Reformation’, in Ha and Collinson (eds.), *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain*, pp. xxvii- xxxvii; Nicholas Tyacke, ‘Lancelot Andrews and the Myth of Anglicanism’, in Lake and Questier (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy*, pp. 5-33.

<sup>299</sup> This is the argument put forward in Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). For how widespread this culture was see idem., ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religious Culture’, in Christopher Durston & Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), pp. 32-57.

<sup>300</sup> David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 29.

<sup>301</sup> Peter Lake and David Como, ‘“Orthodoxy” and Its Discontents: Dispute Settlement and the Production of “Consensus” in the London (Puritan) “Underground”’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2000), pp. 34-70, p. 37; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590- 1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). See also David Como ‘Puritans, Predestination and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, in Lake and Questier (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy*, pp. 64-87. For criticisms of this Calvinist consensus see Peter White, ‘The *via media* in the early Stuart Church’, in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 211-30; idem., *Predestination, Policy and Polemic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); G. W. Bernard, ‘The Church of England c. 1529-c.1642’, *History*, Vol. 75, No. 244 (1990), pp. 183-206; Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). For a counter to this criticism see Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c. 1530- 1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), ch. 7; Lake and Questier, ‘Introduction’, in idem., (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy*, pp. ix- xx.

<sup>302</sup> Randall J. Pederson, *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation 1603- 1689* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 275-76.

brought about by failed campaigns to reform the national Church under Elizabeth.<sup>303</sup> This culture included a community-driven desire for edification and self-improvement and was characterized by Bible reading, meditation, Sabbatarianism and fast day exercises. Some saw this as too strict and unrewarding, and this formed the basis of the antinomian challenge within Puritanism in the early decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>304</sup> Understanding Puritanism as a set of cultural values allows us to explore how mystical theology was used by Francis Rous to support these values, and by John Everard and Giles Randall in reaction against them.

### **Catholic Devotion and Mystical Divines**

Enthusiasm for mystical theology should be seen within the wider context of the continued popularity of Catholic works of devotion and contemplation from the Reformation onwards. This popularity was in part due to the fact that such works tended to leave matters of controversy to one side and focus more on the propagation of holy patterns of life.<sup>305</sup> Alison Shell comments on this tendency when she notes:

Textual evidence can figure what happened to people; devotional writing, in particular, demonstrates how very little real difference there was between Catholic and Protestant spirituality, since it is often hard to tell the denominational allegiances of the authors of devotional tracts where they are not demonstrable from outside evidence. This, indeed, was one of the factors that contributed towards a long-standing debate over whether it was possible for Catholic devotional texts to be appropriated by Protestants.<sup>306</sup>

Nigel Smith has argued that this tendency was the result of English writers consciously overlooking the more dogmatic Catholic elements of devotional and mystical works in order to ‘appropriate them, sometimes wholly, for their own visions’ to ‘extend the boundaries of their own spiritual experiences’.<sup>307</sup> In the early seventeenth century we have a plethora of

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<sup>303</sup> For this period see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Part 8.

<sup>304</sup> Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, pp. 3-7, 65. Bozeman also insists that Puritans were the first wave of Pietism which later flourished under Philipp Jakob Spener and other German Lutheran figures (p. 67). For the reception of Puritan works in Germany see Peter Damrau, *The Reception of English Puritan Literature in Germany* (London: Maney Publishing, 2006).

<sup>305</sup> White, *English Devotional Literature*, p. 12. White notes how many travellers to the Continent would bring back or send back Catholic works for Protestant friends at home, and that even staunch Protestants would buy contraband books of devotion (p. 142). See also idem., *The Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951).

<sup>306</sup> Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, p. 16. Ian Green notes that while prefaces to devotional works may give occasional sharp comment on those who held different views, they very rarely did so in the text itself, see his *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, p. 242.

<sup>307</sup> Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640-60* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 17. Smith is referring specifically to radicals in the 1640s, but here his comment is applied more widely.



examples of Catholic works enjoying a Protestant readership. The *De Aeternitate Considerationes* of German Jesuit Jeremias Drexelius was translated and adapted by Cambridge scholar Ralph Winterton as *The Considerations of Drexelius upon Eternitie* (1632), which had several reprints across the seventeenth century.<sup>308</sup> Clergyman John Dawson translated Drexelius's *Recta Intentio* in 1641 as *A Right Intention of the Rule*.<sup>309</sup> Another example is Henry Montagu, first Earl of Manchester. His *Manchester al mondo* had several editions in the mid-seventeenth century, and featured numerous passages from the *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* of Francis de Sales and the works of Jean Puget de la Serre. Both the works of Francis de Sales and Puget de la Serre had been translated into English by the Catholic priest Miles Pinckney and Jesuit Henry Hawkins respectively, suggesting a popularity that transcended confessional boundaries.<sup>310</sup> The most controversial example was the work of Nicholas Ferrar at the 'Arminian nunnery' of Little Gidding.<sup>311</sup> Ferrar translated *The Hundred and Ten Divine Considerations* of Juan de Valdés. It was published, with a letter of approval from George Herbert, in 1638.<sup>312</sup> As Ian Green has argued, from the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I onwards, many Protestants, like their Continental counterparts, used the works of Augustine and Bernard, as well as Erasmus and Thomas à Kempis in their private or public collections of prayers 'since both Counter-Reformation and Protestant leaders were prepared to use whatever means came to hand to heighten personal religious experience'. As a result many English writers scanned old and new meditative works by Catholic writers for inspiration.<sup>313</sup>

The function of this literature has generally been assumed to be to sustain Catholics or entice lukewarm Protestants. To counteract this, the Puritans who realized Catholic piety

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<sup>308</sup> Jeremias Drexelius, *The considerations of Drexelius upon eternitie* (London, 1632).

<sup>309</sup> J. M. Blom, 'A German Jesuit and his Anglican Readers: The Case of Jeremias Drexelius (1581-1638)', in G.A.M. Janssens and F.G.A.M. Aarts (eds.), *Studies in Seventeenth-Century English Literature, History and Bibliography* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), pp. 41-52, p. 46.

<sup>310</sup> A. F. Allinson, 'The "Mysticism" of Manchester Al Mondo: Some Catholic borrowings in a seventeenth-century Anglican work of devotion', in Janssens and Aarts (eds.), *Studies in Seventeenth-Century English Literature, History and Bibliography*, pp. 1-12. Anthony Milton notes that 'whatever the use that might be made of Roman works of devotion or scholarship, English Protestants did not generally allow this to alter their negative perceptions of the authors themselves, or of the church which claimed their allegiance' and that many English Protestant divines had 'friendly relations with individual papists, or the possession of popish books'; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 235.

<sup>311</sup> Anon., *The Arminian nunnery or, a briefe description and relation of the late erected monasticall place, called the Arminian nunnery at Little Gidding in Huntington-shire* (London, 1641).

<sup>312</sup> Juan de Valdés, *The hundred and ten considerations of Signior John Valdeso treating of those things which are most profitable, most necessary, and most perfect in our Christian profession* (Oxford, 1636).

<sup>313</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 263. Green's work outlines the popularity of works concerning prayer, meditation, the inner life and edification across the early modern period. Especially useful to this study are ch. 4 and Appendix 1.

could appeal to those wanting to live a godly life began to ‘Protestantize’ Catholic works.<sup>314</sup> The Jesuit Robert Parsons’s *The First Booke of the Christian Exercise* (1582) was produced because of a ‘greate want of spirituall bookes in Englande’.<sup>315</sup> In reaction, Edmund Bunny published a version of Parson’s translation that was suitable for Protestants as *A booke of Christian exercise* (1584).<sup>316</sup> Prior to 1600 Parson’s version was published four times, while full and partial editions of Bunny’s numbered thirty editions. Between 1601 and 1640 a combined nineteen editions of both were published. It proved to be just as popular as original Puritan works such as Arthur Dent’s *A Plaineman’s Pathway to Heaven*, which between 1601 and 1640 was published twenty-five times.<sup>317</sup> Yet John R. Yamamoto-Wilson has persuasively argued that Protestant interest in Catholic works did not spawn from temptations to convert or goading to produce ‘sanitized’ versions, but was rather ‘a facet of mainstream Protestant culture’.<sup>318</sup> Early pietistic Puritans such as Richard Greenham assimilated many ideas from Catholic works: life as a struggle or journey, spiritual combat, personal discipline, self-examination, and the belief in a higher spiritual elite, which appealed to Catholic and Puritan alike. Both shared regular schedules of prayer and meditation, and step-by-step instructions in spiritual exercises which had been popularized in the *Devotio Moderna* movement.<sup>319</sup> John Gee, a convert from Catholicism, complained in 1624 that Catholics had ‘*Printing-presses* and *Book-sellers* almost in every corner’ and were making substantial profits. Books printed between 1622 and 1624 included a two-volume Douai Bible (sold for forty shillings, but only worth ten), a life of Catherine of Siena, Augustine of Hippo’s *Confessions* (sold for sixteen shillings, but only worth two shillings six-pence), and a substantial number of other devotional and contemplative works.<sup>320</sup>

<sup>314</sup> Richard C. Lovelace, ‘The Anatomy of Puritan Piety: English Puritan Devotional Literature, 1600–1640’, in Louis Depré and Donald E. Saliers (eds.), *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 294–323, p. 301.

<sup>315</sup> Robert Parsons, *The first booke of the Christian exercise appertayning to resolution* (Rouen, 1582), p. 1.

<sup>316</sup> Edmund Bunny, *A booke of Christian exercise, appertaining to resolution, that is, shewing how that we should resolve our selves to become Christians indeed* (London, 1584). Peter Lake and Michael Questier have shown that the text was central to the ongoing struggles over Catholicism in England, with special focus on the city of York. The struggle was between ‘Jesuit and rigorists such as Persons, [John] Mush, and [Margaret] Clitherow’ on one hand, and the Puritan Bunny, who was from York. The editions of the text, both Jesuit and Puritan, can be seen as part of the struggle to ‘turn church papists either into conviction recusants or into first habitual and then conviction conformists’, Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (New York: Continuum, 2011), p. 71.

<sup>317</sup> Brad S. Gregory, ‘The “True and Zealouse Seruice of God”: Robert Parsons, Edmund Bunny, and The First Booke of the Christian Exercise’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1994), pp 238–68, p. 239.

<sup>318</sup> Yamamoto-Wilson, ‘The Protestant Reception of Catholic Devotional Literature’, p. 69.

<sup>319</sup> Bozeman, *The Precisionist Strain*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>320</sup> John Gee, *The foot out of the snare with a detection of sundry late practices and impostures of the priests and Jesuits in England* (London, 1624), p. 21. The catalogue of works printed features on pp. 91–100. Gee rejected that Catherine of Siena and Christ did ‘*enterchange their hearts*’ as a ‘fantasticall relation of the *Papists*’ (p. 58).

Although sensationalist in nature, Gee's account of the widespread availability of Catholic works suggests something of the continuing interest in Catholic spirituality among Protestants.

References to mysticks surfaced occasionally in the early seventeenth century. In 1617 Richard Middleton, chaplain to the young Charles, wrote of them when discussing the senses, the imagination and the 'hidden supernaturall force of divine wisdome'.<sup>321</sup> In 1625 Thomas Jackson, in his growing anti-Calvinist beliefs, referenced mystical divines as Jean Gerson and Gabriel Vasquez in his discussion of the 'union of our soules with God'.<sup>322</sup> English translations of Catholic works continued to reinforce this. The 1625 edition of *An Abridgement of Christian Perfection* (1625) by the Jesuit Achilles Galliard called on the authority of mystical divines when describing the *Pax anima*, or peace of the soul, whereby the soul would withdraw and submit to God to 'receiveth divine light, that worketh most high understanding & knowledg in her (which the mysticall Devines call *pax divina*)'.<sup>323</sup> The Douai translation of Jean-Pierre Camus's *A Spiritual Combat a tryall of a faithful soul or consolation in temptation* (1632) referenced the 'Misticalls' and 'Misticall Divines' when discussing the difference between the active and contemplative lives, as well as the meditative and contemplative exercises that eventually 'doth unite the hart to God'.<sup>324</sup>

The most substantial evidence for a growing awareness of mysticks is in John Wilkins's *Ecclesiastes* (1646, reprinted 1647 and 1651). Wilkins was chaplain to William Fiennes, first Viscount Saye and Sele, a leading Puritan and anti-Laudian, before becoming warden of Wadham College, Oxford in 1648.<sup>325</sup> Intended as an aid to preaching, the *Ecclesiastes* was printed so 'a Minister may be furnished with such abilities as may make him a Workman *that needs not to be ashamed*. Very seasonable for these Times, wherein the Harvest is *great, and the skilful Labourers but few*'.<sup>326</sup> In the 1651 edition a new list was added for the attention of the minister which had not featured in earlier versions. This new list concerned writers that were 'stiled *Mysticall Divines*, who *pretend* to some higher illuminations, and to give rules for a more intimate and comfortable communion with God'. We should note here that it is probably not a coincidence that Wilkins's definition of

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<sup>321</sup> Richard Middleton, *The Heavenly Progresse* (London, 1617), p. 524.

<sup>322</sup> Thomas Jackson, *A treatise containing the originall of unbeliefe, misbeliefe, or misperswasions concerning the veritie, unitie, and attributes of the Deitie* (London, 1625), p. 456.

<sup>323</sup> Galliard, *An Abridgement of Christian Perfection*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>324</sup> Jean-Pierre Camus, *A Spiritual Combat a tryall of a faithful soul or consolation in temptation* (Douai, 1632), pp. 212-35.

<sup>325</sup> John Henry, 'Wilkins, John (1614–1672)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29421>, accessed 4 Feb 2015]

<sup>326</sup> John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes, or, A Discourse concerning the gift of preaching* (London, 1651), front cover.

mysticks as having an ‘intimate and comfortable communion with God’ had striking similarities with Serenus Cressy’s definition of mystical theology as ‘a nearer, a more familiar, and beyond all expression comfortable conversation with God’, which had been printed by the time of this edition.<sup>327</sup> In the opinion of ‘many sober and judicious men’, these mysticks delivered only ‘a kinde of Cabalisticall or *Chymicall, Rosicrucian* Theologie, *darkning wisdome with words*, heaping together a *farrago* of obscure affected expressions and wild allegories, containing little of substance in them but what is more plainly and intelligibly delivered by others’.<sup>328</sup> Among the mysticks Wilkins thought ministers should be aware of were Teresa of Avila, Jacob Boehme, Harphius, Ruysbroeck, Francis de Sales and Tauler.<sup>329</sup> There is a strong case therefore that Catholic works of contemplation and devotion, whether in their original form or ‘sanitized’ for a Protestant audience, continued to hold sway in the seventeenth century. We will return to the tendency of mysticks to set about ‘darkning wisdom with words’ later in this chapter when discussing antinomian uses of these sources. But before this, we turn to the Puritan uses of contemplation and mystical theology in the writings of Francis Rous.

Scholarly opinion on the concept of ‘Puritan mysticism’ has been mixed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall cautiously observed that this type of ‘mysticism’ was a field ‘almost entirely unexplored’, while Jerald C. Brauer labelled Rous ‘the first Puritan mystic’ and argued for the ‘mystical element of Puritanism’.<sup>330</sup> Others, such as Gordon S. Wakefield, have denied its possibility altogether.<sup>331</sup> Brauer’s analysis ran aground when grappling with ‘the

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<sup>327</sup> Cressy, *Exomologesis* (1647), p. 635. See chapter 4 below.

<sup>328</sup> Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes*, p. 71.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72. This list overlaps with Cressy’s recommendation of the writings of Tauler, Harphius, Ruysbroeck, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila and the more obscure sixteenth-century Dutch work ‘The Evangelical Pearl’ (Cressy, *Exomologesis*, p. 640). The references to Boehme in this list may be explained by the complete edition of Boehme’s works which started appearing in print in 1645, translated by John Sparrow and his cousin John Ellistone and published by Humphrey Blunden. See B.J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 5; Ariel Hessayon, “‘The Teutonicks Writings’”: Translating Jacob Boehme into English and Welsh’, *Esoterica*, Vol. 9 (2007), pp. 129-65. For the reference to Rosicrucian thought see Thomas Willard, ‘*De furore Britannico*: The Rosicrucian Manifestos in Britain’, *Aries*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2014), pp. 32-61.

<sup>330</sup> Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 146; Jerald C. Brauer, ‘Puritan Mysticism and the Development of Liberalism’, *Church History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1950), 151–70, p. 152. Winthrop S. Hudson had previously explored the ‘mystical sentiment within Puritanism’ in ‘Review: Mystical Religion in the Puritan Commonwealth’, *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1948), pp. 51-56, p. 52. Nuttall argues elsewhere that mysticism is ‘discussed endlessly and rather fruitlessly’, but continued to apply the term to Puritan writers; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, ‘Puritan and Quaker Mysticism’, *Theology*, Vol. 78, No. 666 (1975), pp. 518-31, p. 519. Rufus M. Jones also argued for an ‘outburst of mysticism of many types’ in his *Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), esp. ch. 4.

<sup>331</sup> Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion*, pp. 33-35, 101-108. Wakefield’s definition of mysticism meant he came to the conclusion that despite ‘the inheritance of Catholic spirituality’ and direct references to mysticks, figures like Rous could not be counted (p. 108).

labyrinth of various kinds of mysticism' and 'how one can identify a mystic'. Despite these problems he proceeded to artificially separate Rous and later radical Puritans into subcategories of 'classical Christian mystics' and 'Christian spirit mystics'.<sup>332</sup> This chapter seeks to remove Rous from the controversies over different types of mysticism and the debate over whether he should be considered a 'mystic' by exploring explicit references he makes to mystical theology. As we will see, separating Rous from figures such as Giles Randall and John Everard as different types of 'mystics' misrepresents the role mystical theology played in the spirituality of these men and reduces the influence Rous had on more radical figures such as Robert Norwood.

### **Labouring Contemplators and Hidden Cloysterers**

Francis Rous was the greatest example of a Puritan assimilating mystical theology into their existing framework of beliefs. Alongside his contemporary Isaac Ambrose he wrote a great deal on how Puritans could use contemplation and meditation.<sup>333</sup> Yet Rous was no recluse, nor a contemplative satisfied with abandoning the world, and played a central role in the political landscape of the mid-seventeenth century. As a Calvinist in the 1620s Rous experienced the turbulence and uncertainty in the Church of England following the Synod of Dort. While the Synod had rejected the writings of Jacobus Arminius and reaffirmed the Calvinist doctrine of supralapsarian predestination, it had failed to establish a dominant public Reformed Church system in the Netherlands and allowed confessional pluralism to continue.<sup>334</sup> It had also revealed the ideal of bringing the Calvinist and Lutheran Churches together into one internationally cooperative religious community as unobtainable, while also highlighting the fact that the Reformed Churches lacked clear leadership when compared to the Catholic powers of Spain and Austria in the Thirty Years War.<sup>335</sup> Serving as a Member of Parliament several times, Rous was a vocal critic of Episcopalianism and Arminianism in works such as *Testis Veritatis*, which stressed the Calvinism of James I.<sup>336</sup> He supported the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, before swapping support to Cromwell and the Independents. He was elected speaker of Barebone's Parliament in 1653,

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<sup>332</sup> Jerald C. Brauer, 'Types of Puritan Piety', *Church History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (1987), pp. 39-58, pp. 52-53.

<sup>333</sup> Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

<sup>334</sup> Jan Rohls, 'Calvinism, Arminianism and Socianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort', in Martin Mulrow and Jan Rohls (eds.), *Socianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 3-48.

<sup>335</sup> Scott Mandelbrote, 'John Dury and the Practice of Irenicism', in Nigel Aston (ed.), *Religious Change in Europe, 1650-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 41-58, p. 42.

<sup>336</sup> Francis Rous, *Testis Veritatis: The Doctrine of King James our Late Sovereigne of Famous Memory* (London, 1626).

became a member of Cromwell's Privy Council during the protectorate, and in 1657 was summoned to the House of Lords, though he did not take his seat.

An exploration of three of Rous's works, *The Diseases of the Time* (1622), *The Heavenly Academie* (1638), and *The Mysticall Marriage* (1631) reveals the importance of mystical theology in Rous's construction of the Puritan 'labouring contemplator'. He made little effort to conceal the fact that his work belonged to a tradition of 'mysticall and experimentall Divinity'.<sup>337</sup> It would prove influential in many different circles. Robert Norwood, involved in the activities of TheaurauJohn Tany, the self-proclaimed Lord's high priest of the Jews, defended himself against the charge of blasphemy in 1651 by arguing that Rous, a member of Parliament at the time, had also believed that 'the Soul came or was breathed into man from God, is of a divine and heavenly essence, or of the essence of God'.<sup>338</sup> It also influenced writers such as Francis Taylor, who dedicated *Grapes from Canaan* (1658) to Rous, a work which contained a poem steeped in mystical language:

Place not on earth thy chief delight,  
In which there is more black than white:  
Who set their Hearts on things below,  
And on the World their Thoughts bestow,  
Of Heavens joy they little know.

Earth's an Impostumated Bubble,  
A Map of Misery and Trouble;  
Our Silver here is mixt with Dross,  
Our sweet with sour, our gain with loss,  
No comfort here without a cross.

Let Heaven be thy Meditation,  
Climbe thither in thy Contemplation;  
Who such a Pearl have in their eye,  
The worlds Enjoyments by and by  
Will trample on as Vanity.

No seeds of woe are to be found  
I'th' furrows of that holy ground;  
Yea that Caelestial Paradise  
A stranger is to sin and vice,  
No Serpent there is to entice.

E're Death thy Body in the wombe  
Of Mother-Earth again entombe,  
Be sure to get an interest

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<sup>337</sup> Francis Rous, *The Mysticall Marriage* (London, 1631), sig. A7<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page).

<sup>338</sup> Robert Norwood, *A brief discourse made by Capt. Robert Norwood on Wednesday last, the 28 of January, 1651* (London, 1652), p. 4. Norwood specifically mentions Rous's *Mysticall Marriage*, by far the most controversial of Rous's works addressing mystical theology. For more on TheaurauJohn Tany see Ariel Hessayon, 'Gold tried in the Fire'. *The Prophet TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

In that prepared place of rest,  
Whose happiness can't be exprest.

Bid Earth adieu, and fix thy Love  
Upon those endless joyes above;  
Let no Decoy thy Heart entice,  
But still pursue the Pearl of Price,  
Till thou arrive in Paradise.<sup>339</sup>

As we will see, the balance between the active and contemplative lives, the sequential steps necessary to ascend to a higher knowledge of God, and an insistence that experiences given by God are beyond expression are all characteristics of what Rous conceived of as mystical theology. Rous also had a great knowledge of previous works of mystical theology. *The Heavenly Academie* alone contains references to Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Pseudo-Dionysius, Justin Martyr, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard of St. Victor, Harphius and Gerson, among others. Pseudo-Dionysius's *De Mystica Theologia* was particularly influential on Rous as he had read both Aquinas's commentary and Gerson's gloss on the text.<sup>340</sup>

Rous began his career writing against the sins of drunkenness, idolatry and the theatre in *The Diseases of the Time* (1622). The work was undeniably Puritan in outlook, not only for its attack on the perceived faults of society, but also for its discussion of predestination. He wrote that the reasons why God 'chuseth some and leaveth others' was hidden from human understanding. While no man 'doth know the secrets of God', he could be granted a taste of them 'by the Revelation of God'. The individual must be passive in their receiving of these secrets and be sure not to apply their own reason, understanding or judgement, but rather 'meerly suffer when the highest Reason and Wisdome speaketh undiscoverable Mysteries'. In attempting to discover election, the individual must 'heare and beleeve as a Learner, and not instruct as a Teacher. For who hath knowne by his owne wit the inward minde of the Lord?'<sup>341</sup> For Rous, knowledge of election was achieved by direct revelation from God received passively and without human interpretation.

Rous was particularly concerned with what he labelled 'Monasticall Melancholy', which 'cuts off a Christians hands, and turns him all into eyes'. He contrasted John Chrysostom's advocacy of the active life with Gregory the Great's insistence that the

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<sup>339</sup> Francis Taylor, *Grapes from Canaan, or, The believers present taste of future glory expressed in a short divine poem, the issue of spare hours, and published at the request, and for the entertainment of those whose hopes are above their present enjoyments* (London, 1658), sigs. A4<sup>r</sup>-A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>340</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, pp. 189-90. Rous's *Mella Patrum* (London, 1650) also showed a great knowledge of patristic sources. Nuttall comments that Rous had a 'consciousness of mystical tradition greater than that of other Puritan writers' in his *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Devotion*, p. 148.

<sup>341</sup> Francis Rous, *The Diseases of the Time* (London, 1622), pp. 165-66.

‘Contemplative Man enjoyeth his Creator, is already in Heaven, the World is trodden under him’.<sup>342</sup> While initially agreeing with Gregory that ‘Contemplation seems to gather fruit and Action but to sow it’ and ‘attayning the Haven, more comfortable then tossing in the Sea’, Rous attempted to understand the debate in light of his own Puritan beliefs.<sup>343</sup> He stressed how important it was to remember that ‘this World is made for another World’ and was not the place of rest. He preferred advocating activity in this life and preparing for the happiness of the next life where rewards could be reaped. ‘To gather fruit in an undue time, abateth of the bignesse and sweetnesse’, and thus ‘wee must labour in the sixe dayes of this life to enjoy an eternall Sabbath hereafter’.<sup>344</sup> Life was not to be withdrawn from, as the contemplative did, but rather should be used for works of piety, charity and for the mutual benefit of the whole community of saints. If a life was lived in contemplation, then the individual reaped pleasure and rewards for themselves, but nothing for God. Instead Rous advised that each individual should spend their life in service to God, and that ‘the fruits of Love are good Workes; therefore we must proceed as farre as these good Workes, or else wee are short of the end and scope of our life appointed by God’.<sup>345</sup> The resulting assimilation of the works of both Chrysostom and Gregory was what Rous termed a ‘moderation and indifferency’ between the active and contemplative life:

For well doth every Saint of God know, that the glory and comfort of contemplation lasts but some turnes, and then comes an ebbe of grace, a night of vision, and perchance a long storme of Satans buffettings. Eyther the Spirit withdrawes his glorious beames from the soule, or the soule it selfe is forsaken of the body, as not able to endure a long bent of high Meditations; or else the flesh hath leave to take us downe by temptation, that the height of Contemplation may not hurt us by an equall height of Pride. For the height of Contemplation, is made most safe and profitable to us by the lownesse of Humilitie, and Infirmitie is a chiefe preserver of Humilitie. And even in these times though we have not the joy & ability of Contemplation, yet are wee outwardly able for Action, and we can profit others when we seeme wholly unprofitable to our selves. Therefore to fall into a true moderation and indifferency betweene Contemplation and Action, let this be our Rule, that Contemplation nourish and feed Action but not devoure it; that we contemplate to know God and to love God, that we know and love him to please him, and serve him in the Actions of some profitable vocation. We may not quench Contemplation, for it warms the soule, cheereth and heateth her to action; Againe, wee must not exclude Action, for that is to water the roote and to pull away the buds, and so to prevent the fruit.<sup>346</sup>

Each saint underwent their own contemplative mystical experiences, but only fleetingly. The spirit could withdraw, the body could give into exhaustion, or the mind could become distracted by temptation. During these breaks in contemplative experience the active life

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-12.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., pp. 217-19.



should take priority. ‘The excellency of Contemplation and Action is the Concord of them’, Rous stressed, ‘therefore let us bee contemplative that wee may bee active, and in our activenesse strive verily to expresse our Contemplation’. In a poetic balancing of the contemplative with the active, Rous promoted a life in which the individual was assured of their election by contemplative experience, and as a result was inspired to go forth and act out good works for the benefit of others via an active life. The greatest godly life was to become ‘labouring Contemplators’, who after death would rest from their labours when ‘good Actions shall bee turned into the joys of an eternall Contemplation’.<sup>347</sup> ‘Monasticall Melancholy’, or the Catholic insistence on the contemplative life being the ultimate life, was one which ‘cuts off a Christians hands, and turns him all into eyes’. Instead, after gaining acknowledgment of election via contemplation, the saint was to participate in the world rather than observing from afar.<sup>348</sup>

The concept of balance between the active and contemplative lives had been previously addressed in Joseph Hall’s *The Arte Of Divine Meditation* (1606). Hall had apparently gained his ideas from a ‘Monke which wrote some 112. yeeres agoe’. This monk has since been identified as John Mombaer who, alongside Johan Wessel Gansfort, wrote of steps on a ladder of meditation and contemplation as part of the Brethren of the Common Life, a group which evolved out of the *devotio moderna* movement in Germany and the Low Countries in the fifteenth century.<sup>349</sup> Hall was also influenced by Jean Gerson, as he references the ‘Ladder of Contemplation’ of a ‘worthy Chauncellour of Paris’.<sup>350</sup> These influences were, as Richard McCabe and Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen have argued, due to the fact that meditation until this point had largely been a Catholic discipline, and that all books available on the subject had been translated from mostly Spanish sources and smuggled into England by Jesuit priests. Hall was the first to ‘wed the concepts and techniques of Catholic meditative traditions to a Calvinist sensibility’.<sup>351</sup> As a result Hall spoke fondly of

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>348</sup> Later in the text Rous attacked the ‘Cholericke and Melancolicke’ within the Catholic Church, including gluttonous monks, Jesuits of ‘active and busie heat’ and anchorites ‘who often by a fullen humour falls out with the world and falls into a corner, and at best undertakes voluntary temptations’, pp. 460-63.

<sup>349</sup> Joseph Hall, *The arte of divine meditation profitable for all Christians to knowe and practise; exemplified with a large meditation of eternall life* (London, 1606), sig. A4<sup>v</sup>; Schwanda, *Soul Recreation*, p. 130. For the *Devotio Moderna* see John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); F. Akkerman, G.C. Huisman and A.J. Vanderjagt (eds.), *Wessel Gansfort (1419-1489) and Northern Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

<sup>350</sup> Hall, *The arte of divine meditation*, p. 26.

<sup>351</sup> Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, ‘“Love Tricks and Flea-Bittings: Meditation, Imagination and the Pain of Christ in Joseph Hall and Richard Crawshaw’, in Karl Enekel and Walter Melion (eds.), *Meditatio-Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 209-34, p. 213; Richard A. McCabe, *Joseph Hall: A Study in Satire and Meditation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). For the political manoeuvrings of Hall between

contemplative men that teach ‘An heavenly businesse [...] such as wherby the soule doeth unspeakeably benefit it selfe’, but at the same time would chastise them as ‘hidden Cloysterers [who] have ingrossed it to themselves, and confined it within their Celles’. The benefits of such divine exercises were to be ‘universall to al Christians and not to bee appropriated to some professions’.<sup>352</sup> Rous was therefore part of a tradition of writers who appropriated the benefits of Catholic works on contemplation and meditation, but rejected the exclusivity of monasticism in favour of opening the experiences up to all individual Christians.

### Heavenly Academies and Mystical Marriages

Much of Rous’s engagement with mystical theology can be found in *The Heavenly Academie* and *The Mystical Marriage*. In *The Heavenly Academie* Rous compared God to a heavenly teacher and described how students of divinity passed through ‘school’ and ‘university’ to the highest and greatest form of learning, found at the ‘Celestiall Academie’.<sup>353</sup> The individual progressed through these schools via their ‘spiritual eye’ which they used to discern ‘spiritual and heavenly truth’, a gift withheld from heathens and pagans.<sup>354</sup> This heavenly knowledge could not be obtained through ‘carnall reason and humane wit’ but rather, Rous insisted, by following the teachings of those that had ‘professed a deniall of their own wits and reasons, though acute and excellent; and have (as it were) quenched their owne naturall lamps, that they might get them kindled above by the Father of lights’.<sup>355</sup>

Rous described the process of how the individual, or ‘scribe’ in the analogy, would learn a whole range of ‘old things’ found in nature in the lower two academies, which would later serve as ‘earthly glasses, that may help our eyes to a clearer discerning of heavenly images’.<sup>356</sup> To gain ‘new things’ one must ascend to the higher academy and to the ‘teacher of soules’, where they would be given ‘a new light and sight, created in the soule’. This was done initially by rejection of the senses in favour of the realm of reason. Reason was then subsequently rejected in favour of a third ‘divine, spirituall, and heavenly knowledge’ used

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Calvinists and Arminians see Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, ‘Popularity, Prelacy, and Puritanism in the 1630s: Joseph Hall Explains Himself’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 443 (1996), pp. 856–81.

<sup>352</sup> Hall, *The arte of divine meditation*, pp. 2, 4-5.

<sup>353</sup> Francis Rous, *The Heavenly Academie: or The highest school, where alone is that highest teaching, the teaching of the heart* (London, 1638), sig. A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A7<sup>r</sup>. For more on Puritan uses of ‘spiritual senses’ see William J. Wainwright, ‘Jonathan Edwards and his Puritan predecessors’, in Paul L. Gavriluk and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 224-40.

<sup>355</sup> Rous, *The Heavenly Academie*, sigs. A7<sup>v</sup>-A8<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated pages).

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

in discerning ‘divine, heavenly, and spirituall mysteries’. Natural understanding was cast aside and rejected as a product of the fall of man, and God instead gave his ‘Learners and Disciples’ a new form of heavenly understanding, and all spiritual things were seen as they truly should be rather than as false shapes.<sup>357</sup>

Each was given this knowledge in expectation that they used it to enrich their own lives. This knowledge was not ‘meere words, and bare imaginations, but realities, enduring riches, true and solid substance’. The greatest treasure came through Christ, the ‘precious Pearle of the Gospel’. Through a strong love of Christ as the fairest of all men, the individual was drawn to be married to him, sharing everything that is his. Thus through him the Christian received blessings from God, including:

Remission of sins, peace with God, communion with God, conformitie to God, a spirituall sonship, an inhabitation of the Spirit, an earnest of an eternall inheritance, a joy unspeakable and glorious, a power of godlinesse, the hidden Manna, fore-tasts of blessednesse, the kisses of Christ Jesus. Such invaluable treasures, and glorious riches are taught us, & given us by teaching, when God is our Teacher, & we are taught of God [...] This is a lesson which is onely taught in the heavenly schoole; For none can come to Christ, but hee whom the Father drawes by his heavenly teaching: if wee ascend not up to the Heavenly Academie, and get up above the teaching of men, unto the teaching of God, our hearts will never thorowly learne this lesson of happinesse.<sup>358</sup>

After receiving the gifts of knowledge and virtue, both were put to use in the final step of ‘a true, lively, and experimentall knowledge of the things so tasted’. This ‘experimental knowledge’ was beyond all expression and was compared to trying to explain the taste of a ‘West-Indian Piney’ (or Pineapple) to someone who had never tasted it. Because no earthly thing could give a true taste of the heavenly, ‘the heavenly are left to bee knowne by their owne’. This knowledge could also be applied to studying the Bible, as the ‘earthly things’ mentioned in Scripture revealed their true forms as heavenly ‘things’. When Scripture spoke of Christ’s love as more pleasant than wine, and the laws of God as sweeter than honey, these were only echoes or shadows of the true taste of Christ’s love and God’s law which were beyond words and description when felt through such experimental knowledge. Because of this Rous insisted that ‘the true knowledge hereof cannot be delivered over by the greatest Doctor on earth in picture and representation’.<sup>359</sup>

The final product of this experimental knowledge was a fundamental change within the soul. Having been ‘inwardly bedewed’ and written on by the spirit of God, the soul began to generate ‘an unknowne kind of knowledge’ via which the Holy Spirit ‘doth eruct,

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-22.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-28.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

deliver, and speake' to it. This knowledge, written on the heart of man during creation and subsequently blotted out by the fall was revealed via 'the new writing of Regeneration' which came when the soul was 'strongly heated, affected, and animated by the Spirit'. It is probable, according to Rous, that this new knowledge would contradict the tenets of outward earthly teaching. This new knowledge, which Rous referred to as the 'doctrines of the Spirit', should be carefully noted and gathered together into a treasury by all that receive them. This treasury may also contain knowledge received from those of different Christian denominations, perhaps even Catholic, for Rous advocated recording the experimental knowledge of 'those that erre', insisting the truths they find are precious in themselves. Indeed, the inward truths received by these fellow scribes of the heavenly academy should be held above any outward errors they may maintain due to what Rous labels as 'a kind of externall ignorance'. In their complete devotion to God and the taste of heavenly things, it is entirely possible that individuals, through a form of ignorance, continued to maintain outward confessions which contradicted this knowledge.<sup>360</sup> This goes some way to explaining the prevalence of works of mystical theology by Catholic authors in the citations of Rous's works, and reveals his justification for using such writings.

The influence of mystical theology went even further however. Rous explained how the journey from the lower academies to the highest one contains 'certaine staires and steps' by which men could ascend to be pupils of the heavenly teacher.<sup>361</sup> He noted that these steps should not be taken as a division of the academies, for one should strive to be in both at once, the earthly and the heavenly, and try to advance the lower academies by bringing them higher. The first step or stair was intention. It was vital to recognise that knowledge from God would not result in worldly gain and instead focus should be given to making God and his gifts the true goal of the journey. The second was denial of wit and wisdom, for the individual was not to cast their 'owne colour on the things of God' or to try to interpret and understand God through earthly knowledge. The third step was conformity and friendship with God, to maintain trust in the knowledge he gave. The fourth and final step was to accept the knowledge of God wherever it was taught, whether this was in outward public ministries of the Gospel, where he 'offers to write that Word in thy heart', or inner teachings directly from God himself, for both were vital and should not be divided.<sup>362</sup> Rous's Puritanism is emphasised here once again in promoting preaching the Scripture in public, combined with the fact that elsewhere Rous maintained God 'teacheth men best to bee the best Teachers' when they are students of the heavenly academy.<sup>363</sup> Those that ascended to

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-48.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

the highest academy should strive to bring others to a closer knowledge of God through the teaching they received, inspiring others through ministry and the active life.

Echoing sentiments from *The Diseases of the Time* in his conclusion, Rous refers again to the active and contemplative lifestyles. Using similar imagery of fruit, he warns the reader to:

Come often to his Schoole, and wheresoever thou hast newes of his teaching, there desire to meet him with thy learning. Though *Martha* bee troubled with many things, many businesses, yea, many humane Teachers; yet with *Marie* doe thou chuse the better part, and desire to sit at the feet of thy heavenly Teacher. And if any thing hinder thee for a while (for sometimes the the [sic] gathering of fruit may deferre the dressing of the root) yet returne eftsoones to thy Teacher, and meet him in some of his Schooles. And whatsoever hinder thee, take heed that it bee not carelesnesse of thy Teacher, nor a fulnesse of his teaching; for if thus thou withdraw thy selfe from him, thou wilt fall back in thy learning, and not being watered by the dew of his teaching, thou wilt grow drie in the root, and therefore must needs wither and decay in thy fruits.<sup>364</sup>

Beyond this Rous advised the ‘Disciples of God’ to love one another and to acknowledge the different gifts of the Spirit in each of them. One may be given wisdom to govern, another to make judgement on controversies. One may excel in contemplative ability, another in practical, and thus ‘let everie man therefore find out his different abilitie and excellencie, and with his greatest abilitie let him make his greatest traffick’.<sup>365</sup> Each should acknowledge his gift and dispense it as a ‘good Steward of the manifold grace of God’, working together as the members of one body with the final aim of showing, through the excellence of their works, that ‘thou has had an excellent Teacher’. The ultimate goal of this journey was the sight of God himself, ‘who is an ever-flowing Fountaine, and boundlesse Ocean of light, wisdom, grace & glorie’, through which was felt the ‘most glorious Sun-light and influence of Gods presence, irradiating and overflowing’.<sup>366</sup>

The practical application of these beliefs was expounded in *The Mystycall Marriage* (1631). Meant to inspire in times of hardship and discomfort, Rous intended it as a work to bring the soul closer to Christ who was ‘a mighty and impregnable Rock that makes her stedfast’. Via communion with Christ there was a sanctuary or chamber made within each individual where the soul could go for rest and safety in times of danger. This chamber contained a bed of love, where ‘Christ meetes and rests with the soule’ uninterrupted and undisturbed.<sup>367</sup> The work was also intended to be presented like ‘bunches of grapes brought from the land of promise’, or an example of direct communion with God, to show that ‘this

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-61.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>367</sup> Rous, *The Mystycall Marriage*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

land is not a mere imagination' but rather that some had witnessed it and brought away 'parcels, pledges and earnestes of it'. These accounts were of 'a world, above the world, a love that passeth human love, a peace that passeth naturall understanding, a joy unspeakable and glorious, a taste of the chiefe and soveraigne good'. Again the experience was beyond all words and explanation, but Rous was tasked with the role of attempting to explain his experience in order to encourage others to 'come to tasting so by their owne tasting'. This would, in time, result in England producing more 'boxes of precious ointment, even of that mysticall love which droppeth downe from the Head Christ Jesus, into the soules of the Saints, living here below'. His work was to be considered among the number of authors of 'mysticall and experimentall Divinity', and when considered alongside these works, would be shown to not be supernumerary.<sup>368</sup>

Rous described the soul as confined and limited by the body, which hindered mystical union. The soul was constantly distracted by worries about whether God would dwell inside a body which was full of impurity. Through 'mysticall' or 'mediate' union, described as a 'spirituall and mysticall marriage' with Christ, one could regain access to 'immediate union'. In a telling passage, Rous described how because the individual was married to Christ who was also God; through him the soul gained access to God once more. Christ had a personal union with God in this scenario, whereas the soul has a 'mysticall' one. In this marriage with Christ all impurity began to be stripped away and the soul was made pure 'so that they may see God'.<sup>369</sup> Drawing heavily on the Song of Songs, Rous continued to explain how the soul should devote itself to this new husband by calling on Christ to kiss it with the kisses of his mouth, and consider him its 'wellbeloved'.<sup>370</sup> The soul finds reassurance in Christ and freedom from the bonds of sin by being 'united and mingled in a blessed union'.

The marriage metaphor continued throughout the text. Rous described how just as only a widow is allowed to remarry, so must the soul be freed from her old husband, carnal lust. If the soul accepted Christ, he would kill this old husband and retake the bride that is rightfully his.<sup>371</sup> Once this had taken place, the soul would ascend and forget all earthly temptations, tasting the sweetness of God that is beyond 'all that is and can be said'.

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., sig. A7<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page).

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-10.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-17. For more on Rous and the uses of the Song of Songs in the seventeenth century see Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), esp. ch. 2; Noam Flinker, *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000).

<sup>371</sup> Rous, *The Mysticall Marriage*, p. 21.

Drawing once again on the apophatic tradition of mystical theology, Rous described that the sweetness:

Surmounts all knowne sweetnesse of the creatures, and by that which is knowne must that which is unknowne be made knowne. But if that which is knowne be lesse and lower than that which is unknown, that which is knowne may teach and tell us what the unknowne is not, but not what it is. So the joy of love and union in an earthly marriage, cannot expresse a heavenly joy that is spiritually pure, and purely active. Only these and the like comparisons may serve for staires, whereby to ascend, even above these comparisons, and to set our foot on something beyond them.<sup>372</sup>

Only by going into a spiritual union beyond all expression could the soul truly appreciate the sweetness of God. Rous repeated the argument he originally outlined in *The Diseases of the Time*, insisting that the soul should then go out into the world and through this mystical marriage ‘she gaines before she workes, she gaines in her worke, and she gaines after her worke’.<sup>373</sup> Thus while on earth the individual should labour and suffer for God, safe in the strength their mystical experiences provided. Time should not be purely devoted to ‘gazing on them, tasting of them, or in recalling the tastes and images of them’ as ‘contemplative men’ do, for ‘it is utterly a fault and a losse to separate mystical Divinity from practicall’.<sup>374</sup> This labouring could sometimes result in the feeling that Christ had withdrawn himself, leaving the soul full of woe at the abandonment. What followed was a ‘dark night of desertions’ where the soul was terrified by the temptations of her old husband lust, only for Christ to eventually make ‘light to shine out of darknesse’.<sup>375</sup> During the time when ‘the cloud of desertion is upon thy soule’ however, the individual should consult guides on the matter and ‘take heede to borrowed light, untill the day dawne, and the day-starre arise in her owne heart’.<sup>376</sup>

Francis Rous is the perfect example of his own concept of a ‘labouring contemplator’. He saw and expounded the mystical element of predestination and used mystical theology to further encourage social reform and the improvement of society in general. The soul was ‘walled up in a house of clay’, but through mystical experience and living a godly and active life could reap the rewards in heaven.<sup>377</sup> Through mystical experience ‘the spirit thriveth, growes fat, prospereth and rejoyceth in the doing of good workes, even like the mighty man in the running of his race’.<sup>378</sup> Rous ended the work with a

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-10.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

‘Song of Loves’, an account of the desire of the soul to experience mystical union with Christ, a poetic and beautiful expounding of the experience he had outlined throughout the work. He was, with little doubt, highly influenced by works of mystical theology, and successfully integrated them into his existing Puritan and Calvinist beliefs.

### **Mystical Wolves in the Intermystical Season**

Yet Rous was not the only one to harness mystical theology. From the shared Puritan culture heavily influenced by Catholic works of devotion, contemplation and mystical theology came the antinomian challenge to mainstream Puritan piety.<sup>379</sup> As we will see, antinomians were just as prepared to use mystical theology to further their spiritual aims. As Peter Lake and David Como have shown, confrontations between Puritans such as John Etherington and Stephen Denison revealed that within Puritan communities, especially in London, debates over the orthodoxy of certain views proved highly emotive and resulted in charges of heresy, Anabaptism and Familism levelled at individuals seen as promoting unorthodox views.<sup>380</sup> From the mid-1610s onwards antinomianism attacked the very central tenets of what was defended and perceived as ‘orthodox’ Puritan belief. Drawing on the Lutheran doctrine of justification through faith alone, the antinomian stance was that salvation had nothing to do with the individual’s efforts, but rather that they had passively been saved through the grace of Christ. A person was either wholly sinful or completely holy, and those that had been saved had no need for the law because of their purity before God.<sup>381</sup> There was no need for the disciplinary schemes of pietistic Puritanism, nor the daily regimes of self-examination; the biblical laws of loving God and neighbour were divinely written in the soul of the believer and flowed naturally into good behaviour without coercion. They stressed passivity rather than effort in salvation, the only action needed being that of Christ himself, with the individual quietly waiting for Christ’s arrival in the soul to bring salvation, rather than labouring away in exercises and outward actions, an argument which took substantial influence from the *Theologia Germanica*.<sup>382</sup> God became forgiving, forgetting and affectionate in the antinomian scheme, not the ‘Royal eye’ which detected every misstep and ill thought the saint had, which had become the standard metaphor used by Puritan clergy.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> T. D. Bozeman argues that this antinomian backlash was not so much a radical form of Puritanism, but rather due to its non-disciplinary emphasis, or Puritanism without the drive for moral control and purity, it should be labelled ‘*contra-* and *post-*Puritan’, see his ‘The Glory of the “Third Time”: John Eaton as *Contra-*Puritan’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (1996), pp. 638-54, p. 654.

<sup>380</sup> Lake and Como, “‘Orthodoxy’ and Its Discontents”, p. 69.

<sup>381</sup> Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 23-24.

<sup>382</sup> Bozeman, *The Precisiantist Strain*, p. 200-3.

<sup>383</sup> Bozeman, ‘The Glory of the “Third Time”’, p. 639.



The ‘first wave’ of antinomian thought, present in the writings of John Eaton, John Traske, Roger Brierley, Robert Towne, Tobias Crisp and John Everard, among others, had made a great impact in the decades leading up to the Civil Wars. Yet the term ‘antinomian’ was largely used as a polemical label against such writers and distorted into a creed of sexual licentiousness, disorder and unlawfulness which took on a life of its own as the century progressed.<sup>384</sup> Rather than focusing on justification through faith alone, their enemies focused on these supposed consequences, while also linking it to Familism and Libertinism.<sup>385</sup> The spectre of Familism, or following the perfectionist teachings of Hendrick Niclaes (H.N.), was an equally popular ‘bogey man’ in the seventeenth century. It was used more as a ‘reservoir for godly anxieties’ to discredit those considered unorthodox than for any real identification of groups actively using the teachings of Niclaes.<sup>386</sup> Thus in his attacks on the alleged heterodoxy of Etherington, Denison conjured up the image of several kinds of ‘mysticall wolves’ breeding in England, including ‘Schismatickes, Brownists, Anabaptists, Familists’ who attacked the Church of England and seduced the godly.<sup>387</sup> In the face of the rising Arminian party within the Church of England, his attack would also link these heterodox groups to the ‘Arminian Wolves, which make a bridge between us and Popery’.<sup>388</sup>

Antinomianism and Familism proved useful polemical devices to Presbyterians in the 1640s. Linking Independents to antinomianism was a common Presbyterian strategy, especially as antinomianism conjured up chaos and unlawfulness in the minds of many. What followed was a series of works of polemical point-scoring, whereby Presbyterians presented the threat of antinomianism as the natural conclusion of Independent calls for religious toleration, which led to immorality, subversion and anarchy.<sup>389</sup> This was

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<sup>384</sup> Cooper, *Fear and Polemic*, p. 32.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>386</sup> Christopher W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 237. Marsh notes the link between supposed groups of Familists in the 1630s and their Elizabethan predecessors was ‘tenuous’ at best, used more against those suspected of perfectionist or libertine beliefs by accusing them sexually licentious lifestyles. While acknowledging that some writers labelled as such may have read works by Niclaes, Marsh argues they bore little resemblance to the most significant period of Familism under Elizabeth I. Douglas FitzHenry Jones notes that works by Niclaes were printed with relatively little fanfare, but that discussing ‘Familism’ became a ‘marketable curiosity’ used to sell books, as well as functioning as a ‘reservoir for godly anxieties’ in his ‘A straying collective: Familism and the establishment of orthodox belief in sixteenth-century England’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Iowa, 2011), p. 171.

<sup>387</sup> Stephen Denison, *The white wolfe, or, A sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, Feb. 11* (London, 1627), p. 52. For more on this episode see Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker’s Revenge: ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘heterodoxy’ and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>388</sup> Denison, *The white wolfe*, p. 37.

<sup>389</sup> Cooper, *Fear and Polemic*, p. 30. For the influence of Niclaes in this period, see William Nigel Kerr, ‘Henry Nicholas and the Familists: A Study of the Influence of Continental Mysticism on England to 1660’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1955).

encouraged through works such as Thomas Edward's three-part *Gangraena* which polarized, often without sensitivity to diversity, the rampant spread of sectarianism with the need for Parliament to implement a full Presbyterian Church system to stop such a spread.<sup>390</sup> He described how 'many monsters conceived by some in this Intermysticall season' were waiting to emerge into public view, only needing 'the Mid-wife and nursing mother of a Toleration, to bring them fourth and nourish them'.<sup>391</sup> Familism and antinomianism had been given a central role in these emerging errors in Thomas Weld's *A short story* (1644), Thomas Gataker's *God's Eye on his Israel* (1644), Robert Baylie's *A Dissuasive From The Errors of the Time* (1645), Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography* (1645) and Daniel Featley's *The Dipper Dipt* (1645).<sup>392</sup> Such concerted efforts at cataloguing heresy have lead Nigel Smith to refer to these men as the 'Eusebiuses of their day'.<sup>393</sup> Gataker, along with Samuel Rutherford, specifically targeted the New Model Army chaplains William Dell and John Saltmarsh, who along with Tobias Crisp and John Eaton were seen as the 'spring of Antinomians, Familists, Libertines, Swenck-feldians, Enthysiasts'.<sup>394</sup> The mystical *Theologia Germanica* had certainly been popular in the 'radical Reformation' of the sixteenth century and had been used by Spiritualists such as Sebastian Frank, Caspar Schwenckfeld and

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<sup>390</sup> Ann Hughes argues that *Gangraena* should be seen as Edward's attempt to invoke and 'bring polarization into being, rather than as dispassionate description', noting that he paid little attention to those who did not fit his labels; Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 325.

<sup>391</sup> Thomas Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena, or, A catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time, vented and acted in England in these four last years also a particular narration of divers stories, remarkable passages, letters: an extract of many letters, all concerning the present sects : together with some observations upon and corollaries from all the fore-named premisses* (London, 1646), pp. 2-3.

<sup>392</sup> Thomas Weld, *A short story of the rise, reign, and ruin of the antinomians familists & libertines that infected the churches of Nevv-England and how they were confuted by the Assembly of ministers there, as also of the magistrates proceedings in court against them* (London, 1646); Thomas Gataker, *Gods eye on his Israel. Or, A passage of Balaam, out of Numb. 23.21* (London, 1644); Robert Baylie, *A dissuasive from the errorrs of the time wherein the tenets of the principall sects, especially of the independents, are drawn together in one map, for the most part in the words of their own authours, and their maine principles are examined by the touch-stone of the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1645); Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography: or, A description of the heretickes and sectaries of these latter times* (London, 1645); Daniel Featley, *Katabaptistai kataptistoi The dippers dipt, or, The anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and eares, at a disputation in Southwark* (London, 1645).

<sup>393</sup> Nigel Smith, 'Non-conformist voices and books', in John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 4: 1557-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 410-30, p. 416.

<sup>394</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *A survey of the spirituall antichrist* (London, 1648), front page; Thomas Gataker, *A mistake, or misconstruction, removed. (Whereby little difference is pretended to have been acknowledged between the Antinomians and us.)* (London, 1646); idem., *Shadowes without substance, or, Pretended new lights: together, with the impieties and blasphemies that lurk under them, further discovered and drawn forth into the light* (London, 1646).

Ludwig Haetzer to form their own doctrines. The reference to ‘*Swenck-feldian*’ suggests contemporaries were making this connection.<sup>395</sup>

Attacks on those associated with the New Model Army, formed after the failure of the ‘Uxbridge Treaty’ with Charles I, were especially important in the mid 1640s for Presbyterians. Harvest failures, high prices and high taxation were used to great effect in claiming Presbyterian ecclesiastical discipline and a settlement with the king would restore order. To many Presbyterians the New Model Army was the major obstacle in a settlement with Charles, and was seen as a seedbed of religious extremism. Since 1640 religious agreements among Parliamentarians had been based on what to abolish within the national Church, rather than what to replace it with. The Westminster Assembly had been tasked with generating constructive ideas for the future of the national Church, but had been prone to infighting between the majority support of Presbyterianism, and the Dissenting Brethren who upheld the case for religious toleration and independency. The abolition of the Book of Common Prayer in 1645 and its substitution with the Presbyterian Directory of Worship, alongside the establishment of Presbyterianism in England in March 1646, was the result of a long campaign by Presbyterians against Independents. Calls for the disbandment of the New Model Army continued into 1647, as did growing discontent among groups such as the Levellers, who believed that the Westminster Assembly and the Long Parliament were failing to bring about a ‘godly Reformation’. This would reach crisis point when the New Model Army seized the king and published their *The Heads of the Proposals*, which sought to establish a more tolerant national Church and liberty of conscience.<sup>396</sup> Accusations of antinomianism and Familism thus served an ulterior motive in the 1640s and mystical theology was used by these heresiographers to tap into popular fears of both popery and sectarianism to show the danger of Independent calls for toleration. The antinomian controversies in the 1620s and 1640s were also linked by the collapse of print censorship in 1640-42 which enabled John Etherington to argue his side of the conflict with Stephen Denison some twenty years earlier. Not only did this stir up old concerns about antinomianism, but Etherington’s *A brief discovery of the blasphemous doctrine of familisme* (1645) seemed to confirm Presbyterian fears about the activities of figures such as John Everard and Giles Randall.

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<sup>395</sup>George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 192, 460.

<sup>396</sup>Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age* (London: Routledge, 2012), ch. 6.

## John Everard: Mystical Theology as Gospel-Treasures Opened

In his attack on Familism, Etherington accused Everard, Randall and John Pordage of ‘teaching the doctrines of H.N.’.<sup>397</sup> We will return to Giles Randall later in this chapter, while John Pordage features in chapter 5 of this study. Here we will first turn to the activities of the elusive John Everard, whose sermons and teachings were heavily influenced by works of mystical theology, many of which he had translated himself. One of the most revealing sources we have for Everard’s activities is the testimony of Giles Creech in 1638. Fearing punishment from the High Commission, Creech told the authorities about a substantial underground network of antinomians and Familists he had once been part of. He had for some time been a disciple of Everard and identified that as well as the works of the Niclaes the groups were sustained by two major works: Benet of Canfield’s *Rule of Perfection* and ‘that cursed book’ the *Theologia Germanica*.<sup>398</sup> The main seller of these manuscripts was Edward Fisher, who had received a translation of the *Theologia Germanica* from Roger Brearley and Richard Tennant, the ringleaders of the ‘Grindletonian movement’ in the north of England.<sup>399</sup> Everard had a strong interest in alchemical works, influenced by Robert Fludd. Around the same time Augustine Baker wrote to Robert Cotton asking for the works of Rolle and Hilton, Everard wrote to try and secure a copy of the alchemical work ‘The Way to Bliss’.<sup>400</sup> He was also known to those involved in the Massachusetts Bay Colony antinomian controversy, especially John Winthrop Jr.<sup>401</sup> One of those involved in the controversy, Henry Vane the younger, would later be accused of having not contented himself with the shallows of spirituality, but rather ‘waded into the deeps of Divinity,

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<sup>397</sup> John Etherington, *A brief discovery of the blasphemous doctrine of familisme, first conceived and brought forth into the world by one Henry Nicolas of the Low Countries of Germany about an hundred years agoe* (London, 1645), p. 10.

<sup>398</sup> Bodleian Library MS Tanner 70, fol. 181r.

<sup>399</sup> Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 5-6. The ‘Prologue’ to Como’s work shows that while many of the sources dealing with antinomianism were hostile, and therefore should have their reliability questioned, many of the people named by Creech can be identified from other sources. Fisher’s own work would later be a bestseller for Giles Calvert, whose bookshop at ‘The Black-Spread Eagle’ stocked works by Gerrard Winstanley, Abiezer Coppe, Hendrick Niclaes, John Pordage and TheaurauJohn Tany to satisfy the growing networks of groups reading such works; see Mario Caricchio, ‘News from the New Jerusalem: Giles Calvert and the Radical Experience’, in Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 69- 86.

<sup>400</sup> British Library Cotton MS Julius C. III, fols. 171-73. That great enthusiast for all things alchemical, Elias Ashmole, later published a copy with Everard’s marginal notes as *The Way to Bliss. In Three Book* (London, 1658).

<sup>401</sup>As revealed in a letter between Winthrop and Edward Howes in 1635. Howes was asked to go to Everard with some spiritual queries of Winthrop’s. Everard’s reply suggests that Winthrop had some enquiry about the writings of various authors, as Everard stated that the will of God would eventually ‘make a harmonie amonge all your authors, causing them sweetly to agree, and putt you for ever after out of doubt & question’, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. VI- Fourth Series* (Boston, 1863), p. 449. For more on this episode and the activities of Howes see Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, Epilogue.

possibly so far sometimes as he cannot feel the ground of Scripture'.<sup>402</sup> It was a claim, as we will see, that was often levelled at Everard and those who shared his spiritual outlook.

Everard had been in trouble several times during the reign of James I due to his outspoken criticism of Catholicism and the proposed marriage between Charles and the Spanish Infanta. In the 1630s Everard was part of the private devotional circle of Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, and Edmund Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, during which time they tried to protect him from the High Commission.<sup>403</sup> There Everard produced his own translation of the *Theologia Germanica* before 1636, after which his house was searched in November 1637 for any 'papers and writings' which 'may concerne the State', which was followed by the confessions of Creech in January 1638.<sup>404</sup> For almost a year he repeatedly appeared before the High Commission, until on 19 July 1639 he was suspended from his ministry, ordered to pay a fine of £1,000 and subject to having his books burnt. On 18 June 1640 he appeared before the court once again to recant the 'hereticall, pernicious & Atheisticall opinions' he had spread in his sermons and publications, and was restored to his ministry.<sup>405</sup> Sometime between December 1640 and March 1641 Everard died, but not without proofing and approving copies of his own sermons, which were preserved by his friends and disciples. One of those disciples, Rapha Harford, would later publish his sermons and translations together.<sup>406</sup> A manuscript at Cambridge preserves his original translations, which include *The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* by Sebastian Franck, the *Theologia Germanica*, and Nicholas of Cusa's *The Vision of God*.<sup>407</sup> By the end of his life he had made a translation of *The Divine Pymander*, published in 1649.<sup>408</sup> He was also responsible for translating Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota*, later published in 1650 as *The idiot in four books*, as well as Cusa's *De Dato Patris Luminum*.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Martin Finch, *Animadversions upon Sir Henry Vanes book, entituled The retired mans meditations* (London, 1656), sig. A3<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page). See also Henry Vane, *The Retired Mans Meditations, Or, The Myserie And Power Of Godlines* (London, 1655).

<sup>403</sup> Samuel Hartlib described him as 'chaplain' to the Earl of Holland in Fulham. See M. Greengrass, M. Leslie, and M. Hannon (2013). *The Hartlib Papers*. Published by HRI Online Publications, Sheffield [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/hartlib, accessed 09 December 2014], REF: 29/2/12B.

<sup>404</sup> British Library Stowe MS 549, fol. 19. One of the copies of Creech's confession contains the notes of Sir John Lambe. This copy records how the Latin manuscript of the *Theologia Germanica* had been passed from Brearley to Fisher to Everard, who then translated it for the Earls of Holland and Musgrave, see The National Archives SP 16/520/85.

<sup>405</sup> Bodleian Library MS Tanner 67, fol. 143.

<sup>406</sup> Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 224-25.

<sup>407</sup> Cambridge University Library MS Dd. 12.68.

<sup>408</sup> John Everard, *The divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus in XVII. books. Translated formerly out of the Arabick into Greek, and thence into Latine, and Dutch, and now out of the original into English; by that learned divine Doctor Everard* (London, 1649).

<sup>409</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The idiot in four books. The first and second of wisdom. The third of the minde. The fourth of statick experiments, or experiments of the ballance. By the famous and learned C. Cusanus* (London, 1650). This was confirmed by T. Wilson Hayes, 'John Everard and Nicholas of

Most of his translations were later published, along with his sermons, as *Some Gospel-Treasures Opened* (1653) and again with a more substantive introductory epistle in 1657. According to Harford they were published for those who had ‘departed from the love of this World, and expect no love from it’ and had by experience found ‘the Pearl of great price’ by entering into a ‘*Super-Excellent, Super-Eminent* Life’. This life was not one of cold prayer but rather one that ‘must be *Esteemed, Prized, Loved* above all things [...] if any other thing take off your Eye, or your Love from the persuit thereof, you immediately lose the very sight of it’. Until this life had begun, one could not understand Everard’s sermons and would find them full of parables and difficult sayings. Without the true knowledge of God and experience of what was written in them, they would have little meaning.<sup>410</sup> Combining the rejection of knowledge contained in mystical theology with the message of 1 Cor. 1.28, the sermons were meant for those that had rejected wisdom and learning. The foolish and the weak, rather than the wise, were alone suitable for the process of ‘*Annihilation, Mortification and Self-denial*’ which resulted in the ‘*spiritual, practical, experimental* life’.<sup>411</sup>

This was reinforced with an appeal to return to the spirituality of the primitive Christians, the ‘precious jewels of God’ who delighted in self-denial and spiritual love and set their feet at the bottom of the six ascending steps to God: condemnation, annihilation, abdication, indifference, conformity and union, all for the end of discovering ‘Solomons Glorious Throne’. ‘Where are the men now, who desire to climb these steps?’ asked Harford, ‘how low, and how poorly do most men (yea most Professors) live?’ Instead of knowledge and riches, persecution and self-annihilation like that which the primitive Christians delighted in should be the aim of the Christian life. Thus Everard had wanted men who ‘had experience of Christ, rather than men of notions or speculations’. The mean, poor and despised of the world would inherit the ‘experimentall truths’ and Everard’s sermons were aimed at discovering such knowledge. Some were clearly aware of the pre-Christian roots of his philosophy, for one scholar asked him if the concepts self-denial, annihilation

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Cusa’s *Idiota*, *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 28 (1981), pp. 47-49. See also idem., ‘A Seventeenth Century Translation of Nicholas of Cusa’s *De Dato Patris Luminum*’, *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 11 (1981), pp. 113-36.

<sup>410</sup> John Everard, *The Gospel treasury opened, or, The holiest of all unvailng discovering yet more the riches of grace and glory to the vessels of mercy unto whom onely it is given to know the mysteries of that kingdom and the excellency of spirit, power, truth above letter, forms, shadows* (1657), sigs. A4<sup>r</sup>-A5<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated pages, A5 incorrectly labelled as A3).

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., sig. A6<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page). T. Wilson Hayes subjected this belief to a decidedly Marxist analysis, noting that Everard’s teachings were something through which ‘ordinary people could free themselves from the intellectual hegemony of the clerical elite and challenge the ideological foundation of the ruling oligarchy’ in his ‘John Everard and the Familist Tradition’, in Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (eds.), *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 60-69, p. 60.

and resignation were ‘that of Pythagoras’, but Everard apparently was able to reassure him.<sup>412</sup> Others seemingly suspected Familism, but Harford assured the reader that Everard ‘miseth both Rocks’ of pure rationality on one side, and the Familist who placed God above all ordinances and so ‘hath turned licencious Ranter’ on the other.<sup>413</sup> Instead he had been gifted with the ability to rent the veil and cast away the shadows of the ‘outward and killing letter’ of Scripture, bringing forth the mysterious and mystical interpretation that were ‘*Rays of the glory of the holiest of all appearing, being hid from ages and generations*’.

Drawing on a long tradition of allegorical readings, Everard maintained that Scripture contained a secret, hidden meaning that went beyond the literal written word. He believed that every passage from both the Old and New Testaments could be interpreted as an allegory for an event which would occur in the individual’s soul. In some respects this drew on the commonplace Puritan belief of Scripture having a powerful impact on the reader through ‘experimental knowledge’, the sort which Francis Rous advocated above. Salvation however was to be found in this secretive knowledge, in which the true word of God in Scripture would be revealed to not be in the empty shell of the letter, but in the hearts of those reading it in a process of re-enactment. The life of Christ in the New Testament was to be seen as an allegory for the suffering of the individual on the road to perfection. This suffering would end with the death of selfhood and union with God.<sup>414</sup>

Many of Everard’s sermons covered these themes, drawing on the comparison between the persecution of the primitive Christians and the suffering of those in Everard’s day. Parallels were drawn with the Apostles in the case of Acts 2:13, and Everard asked if the reader would have judged the Apostles, as the Jews had, as being ‘*Mad, Distracted, Drunk, Filled with new wine*’ simply because they were not able to comprehend the ‘*Mystical Depths of the Spirits working in the hearts of those regenerated*’.<sup>415</sup> Elsewhere he spoke of the nature of God being beyond all thought and imagination and that in taking away everything comprehensible ‘in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth’ one came nearest to God.<sup>416</sup> This was exactly as ‘*Dionysius* in his book of *Mystical Divinity*’ had outlined and was an author who elegantly expressed the concept ‘we have so often spoke of’. Everard reassured his audience in the same sermon that ‘those that go about to find God *this way*, in the way of poverty, and taking away, *they* shall find God in Christ Jesus’.<sup>417</sup> Thus the expounding of the mystical meaning of Scripture and mystical

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., sig. A8<sup>v</sup> (unpaginated page).

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., sigs. A9<sup>v</sup>-A10<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated pages).

<sup>414</sup> This is a rather brief digestion of what Como lays out in more detail in ch. 7 of *Blown by the Spirit*.

<sup>415</sup> Everard, *The Gospel treasury opened*, p. 106.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

theology combined. One example is how Matthew 5.3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven', was shown to be achievable by following Pseudo-Dionysius in 'subtracting and taking away' into a sort of poverty of the senses and images. By rejecting God as light, heat, cold, softness, hardness and all other forms, the individual was willingly impoverished of senses and able to 'come and draw *near* to Him'.<sup>418</sup>

The source material fuelling Everard's ideas, by 'Sublime and Mortified Authors', also featured in the printed collection of sermons. Five chapters of 'mystical divinity' from Pseudo-Dionysius were printed and featured all the main tenets of mystical theology. Rejection of the senses, union with the divine who is beyond all essence and knowledge, and separation from all earthly constraints featured heavily. The affirmative and negative paths, or cataphatic and apophatic theologies were both explained, with the superiority of the negative path asserted. After the reader had 'Read and Felt, and dost Understand what goeth before', they could progress onto the sayings of Hans Denck.<sup>419</sup> These sayings again may be 'somewhat Acute and Subtil to the flesh: for they are Divine, of which flesh cannot judge'. This was followed by another of Denck's works, the *Widerruf* or 'confession'. In this Denck admitted that he preferred the Scriptures before all human treasure or knowledge, but 'not so much esteem them, as the Word of God which is Living, Potent and Eternal'. Thus the true word of God is not tied to the Scriptures alone, but also through a 'spark of Divine study or knowledge'. Through this acknowledgement, the individual should not settle with 'the Killing Letter of the Scriptures', although important, and 'endeavour to hunger for God and his word'.

The reinforcing of Everard's sermon messages with texts from mystical theology continued with three extracts from texts attributed to Tauler. 'A Short Dialogue between a Learned Divine and a Beggar' also featured in a slightly different wording in Giles Randall's *Theologia Germanica*. Another was an extract taken from page 106 of the 1548 edition of the sermons of Tauler, printed in Cologne. It advised each Christian to 'Shut up all his Senses in quietness' and with continual prayer and fixation on God alone become 'Divine and God-like in his life and conversation'. This would eventually lead to a new life in which the Christian was withdrawn from all men and 'Naked and Free from all Inwardly-received Images, and his soul Untangled from all Accidents whatsoever, that he may continually receive The Influence of His Heavenly Father into his soul'. The Christian should strive to be more like the example of Christ, for it was Christ who had worked 'all these things in

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., p. 428.



him, and not Himself, nor Any His own Industry or Acquiring'.<sup>420</sup> In another short extract, taken from page 107 of the same edition of Tauler, the fruition of this and many of the themes from Everard's sermons and other translations were summarised:

WE shall most certainly Attain The Various and Numerous exercises of this Book; yea, whatsoever can be written of a Perfect and Divine-like Life, viz. by this means if we withdraw our selves from the love of all frail and mortal things: if we study to attain an humble Resignation, and inward Nakedness, and embrace Onely God, by faith and love in the bosom of our souls, and hide our selves wholly with our Souls, Spirit, Body, Heart and Senses in his Most Holy Humanity; and labour by a certain lively imitation, to become comformable thereunto: and Finally, by His life and merits, Inhere and cleave continually and perpetually to his Divinity. Whosoever is enabled by Jesus Christ to do These things, doth doubtless Obtain all the aforesaid Things, and is Comforted and Led by God, and hath alwayes a Free introversion or turning inward into himself; And all his works, and Himself also, are made Divine: so that in this Perfect imitation of Christs example, He doth plainly and clearly know the Lively Truth of the Sacred Scriptures in his own experience, and as it shineth into all Pure Hearts.<sup>421</sup>

Between the sermons and translations of Everard we can see the central role mystical theology played in his understanding of salvation, the true message of Scripture, and the rejection of all earthly pride and knowledge when striving towards perfection. As in the work of Francis Rous, mystical theology was used to produce an 'experimental' knowledge or affection in the soul. But Rous's 'labouring contemplators' were inspired to improve society and undertake good works during a pious life, content to reap the rewards in the next life. Everard's followers were like '*Drops apart from the Sea*', who acknowledged that God working within them brought perfection, immortality and a desire to do the will of God that transcended the need for law. They realized through fleeting glimpses that Christ was present in all things in all times, like a vast ocean, and through a process of self-annihilation could reclaim knowledge of this presence within themselves.<sup>422</sup> '*Poor Drops* though we be, yet let us not be discouraged: we belong to the *vast Ocean*', Everard stated reassuringly, 'we may claim and appropriate *to our selves* whatever may be *appropriated* to the Sea, or to the Ocean *as well* as any other drop: for we are united and *made One* with the Ocean'.<sup>423</sup> He brought his blend of antinomianism and mystical theology together best in concluding this analogy of the individual as a 'poor drop' when he advised:

If we *can be Content to dye*, & forsake our selves *Then should we Return*, and be made One with *that immense Ocean*: Could we but be contented to annihilate our selves, *to be brought* to Nothing, we should *be made Something*, If *That Sun* of righteousness would but arise and *dissolve us*, and draw us up *into Himself*, then we, even we, *as poor as* we be, should be united and made one with the Almighty.

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., pp. 449-50.

<sup>422</sup> Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 257-60.

<sup>423</sup> Everard, *The Gospel treasury opened*, p. 403.

Beloved, Beloved, The Only Reason Why WE Remain such Empty Drops, is because we esteem our selves to be Somewhat, when indeed we are nothing.<sup>424</sup>

### The Mystical Fantasies of Giles Randall

The main target of Etherington's attacks in *A brief discovery of the blasphemous doctrine of familisme* was undoubtedly Giles Randall. Randall had been preaching Familist doctrines at a house 'within the Spittle-yard without Bishops-gate, neere London' to a large groups of followers.<sup>425</sup> According to Etherington, Randall was only one of a much larger group of Familists that included Doctors of Divinity, Peers and persons of quality, all of which had 'taught and entertained the same with great affection, and high applause'.<sup>426</sup> This circle had taught and entertained 'mysticall fantasies' and dealt with 'allegories of humane invention' just like Niclaes had.<sup>427</sup> Indeed Niclaes had gone beyond the Scripture into 'parabolicall sayings and mysticall sentences'.<sup>428</sup> Randall was described as a 'great Antinomian' by Thomas Edwards, who recounted a story of a follower of Randall's who tried to sell his Bible because 'he could make as good a Book himself'. Randall and Everard clearly had much in common, as Randall's disciples 'do commonly affirme they are not to beleieve the Scriptures further then their own Reason doth perswade them of the truth of them, and that the Scriptures are no more the Word of God then the words any man speaks are; because he could not speak those words but by a power from God'.<sup>429</sup>

Claims of Randall being a Familist, as Nigel Smith has noted, were probably due to his willingness to engage with works of mystical theology.<sup>430</sup> This certainly seems to be the reason Edwards targeted him specifically. He was concerned that Randall was fuelling the 'many Popish and Prelaticall opinions' because many maintained:

Perfection in this life with some Popish Friers, besides divers other Popish Errors: hence divers Popish Bookes written by Preists and Friers have beene Translated and lately set forth by some Sectaries, sold openly, and I suppose Licensed because the Stationers names for whom printed, and Printers names expressed.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>425</sup> Etherington, *A brief discovery of the blasphemous doctrine of familisme*, p. 1.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., unpaginated page, recto of front cover entitled 'The summe or maine points of the Doctrine of H.N.'.

<sup>429</sup> Edwards, *The first and second part of Gangraena*, p. 16. Randall is referred to as a 'great antinomian' on an unpaginated page at the back of the edition in 'The Table'.

<sup>430</sup> Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p. 137.

<sup>431</sup> Thomas Edwards, *The third part of Gangraena. Or, A new and higher discovery of the errors, heresies, blasphemies, and insolent proceedings of the sectaries of these times; with some animadversions by way of confutation upon many of the errors and heresies named* (London, 1646), sig. \*4<sup>v</sup> (unpaginated page).

The examples Edwards gave in a marginal citation were ‘The Vision of God by Cardinall Cusanus’, ‘The third part of the Rule of perfection by a Cappuchian Friar’ and ‘Another booke written by a Priest’. This third book was likely the *Theologia Germanica*, completing the trinity of books published by Randall in the late 1640s. These works had, according to Rutherford, encouraged men to be ‘Monkish in Allegories’ because ‘Famillisme is a branch that grew from the root of Popery’ that obsessed over ‘spirituall Monkish contemplations’.<sup>432</sup> To Presbyterian critics, mystical theology was a popish error that had been swept up by sectaries in their desire to assimilate a whole range of beliefs and form new heterodox opinions. Yet to those practicing antinomian and perhaps some form of Familist belief, the works of mystical theology Randall published only served to further inspire and advance their beliefs.

The first work Randall set his hand to was Benet of Canfield’s *The Rule of Perfection*, renamed *A Bright Starre* (1646). This was an edition of the third, and by far the most controversial book, of Canfield’s *Rule* which Randall thought deserved to be published. Canfield himself had tried to publish it in 1602, but the press was seized and he was thrown out of England in 1603. An English edition was eventually published in 1609 in France, but only contained the first two books of *The Rule*, the third book appearing a year later in French and Latin.<sup>433</sup> Interestingly Randall’s edition reproduced none of the front matter or approbations of the 1609 edition, nor Canfield’s dedications to the English Bridgettine nuns in Lisbon, St Ursula’s in Louvain, and the Benedictines in Brussels, erasing any trace of monasticism from the text.<sup>434</sup>

In his introductory epistle, Randall stated that the work highlighted the ‘heights, lengths, breadths, depths of sweetnesses and fulnesses beyond measure in the Abyesse of the Divine Vision’. While the argument in the book was ‘high, hard, and indeede almost unheard of amongst us’, the subject would allow the reader to ‘reacheth into the heavens’ to ‘the top of our ascent to God’.<sup>435</sup> Yet caution should be taken because, as Randall reminded the reader, ‘the Author was a man, and Elias the man is subject to infirmities, his heavenly treasure is in an earthly vessel, thou shouldst doe well to try the spirits, and from within to

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<sup>432</sup> Rutherford, *A Survey Of The Spirituall Antichrist*, pp. 164, 220.

<sup>433</sup> Birrell, ‘English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles-I’, *Downside Review*, Vol. 94 (1976), pp. 60-81, p. 61.

<sup>434</sup> Benet of Canfield, *The Rule of Perfection* (Rouen, 1609).

<sup>435</sup> Giles Randall, *A bright starre, leading to, & centering in, Christ our perfection. Or a manuell, entituled by the authour thereof, the third part of the Rule of perfection. Wherein such profound mysteries are revealed, such mysterious imperfections discovered, with their perfect cures prescribed, as have not been by any before published in the English tongue: faithfully translated for the common good* (London, 1646), sigs. A3<sup>v</sup>-A4<sup>r</sup>.

approve or reprove'.<sup>436</sup> Summarising the three books of *The Rule* as the 'outer, inner and intimate', he advised the reader that perfection was 'not to be sought for or found in the acts, thoughts, minde or will of man', but rather in 'passive perfection' where God was 'drawing forth his beauty in us'.<sup>437</sup> The work was therefore suitable for the experienced Christian who would have 'good successe hereof amongst the children of light, the taught of God, who run and reade the hidden and deepe things of God'.<sup>438</sup>

The actual substance of Canfield's work followed the *via negativa* teachings of Pseudo-Dionysius, reinforced by Canfield owning a 1582 Carthusian transcript of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.<sup>439</sup> The rejection of the senses and human understanding featured heavily, with Canfield drawing on Pseudo-Dionysius when speaking of the 'rising to mystical Visions, viz. The Divine Being, thou forsake thy wits by a strong contrition and all works of thy understanding, and all knowables and invisibles'.<sup>440</sup> He described the purifying of the soul as 'stripping her of all forms and Images of all things as well created as uncreated, and enabling her so naked and simplified to contemplate without help of formes'.<sup>441</sup> Elsewhere he revealed the influence of Bonaventure when he described the Passion as 'the most perfect and high contemplation', even above contemplating 'the Being of God and his Perfections, Attributes, Trinity and other Mysteries of his Godhead'.<sup>442</sup> Through this process of self-forgetting, purgation and contemplation, the soul would pass through the active and contemplative lives, and into the third, which was 'a spirit Anointed for the Life Supereminent'.<sup>443</sup>

In the same year Randall published an edition of Nicholas of Cusa's *De Visione Dei*, translated by John Everard to be used 'for the good of the saints'.<sup>444</sup> This time in his preliminary epistle Randall revealed his opinion that 'nothing is, or ever was endeavoured, by most men, with more industry, and lesse successe, than the true knowledge of the true God'.<sup>445</sup> These men could be split into four groups, ranging from 'atheists' and those ignorant of God at one end of the spectrum to 'the true knowers who know the only true God

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., sig. A5<sup>r</sup>. This is likely a reference to 2 Corinthians 4:7 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us'.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., sigs. A5<sup>r</sup>-A5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., sig. A6<sup>r</sup> (unpaginated page).

<sup>439</sup> Birrell, 'English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles-I', p. 61.

<sup>440</sup> Randall, *A Bright Starre*, p. 15.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>444</sup> Giles Randall, *Ophthalmos Aplois or the Single Eye, Entitled The Vision of God* (London, 1646). The case for Everard being the translator due to the extracts in MS. Dd. 12. 68 was made by Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1914), p. 256. Nigel Smith has also noted a 'very close relationship' between the Cusa fragments translated by Everard and Randall's published version in his *Perfection Proclaimed*, p. 117.

<sup>445</sup> Randall, *Ophthalmos Aplois or the Single Eye*, sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

truly' at the other. This fourth type of person 'knowes, not God in Image, but essence, and substance, not any thing for God but the true and substantiall God'. Thus there were three states of ignorance and darkness, whereas light only came to those that had achieved the 'perfection of the last'. The work would be useful to those striving for this last category, for 'if God give unto thee, a seing eye, and understanding heart to read [...] these things will bee easier and more facile to thee which is the desire which he desireth for thee who is a lover of thee in the truth of Jesus'.<sup>446</sup>

The text itself promised much more than Randall's epistle, revealing from the very first sentence that it would lay open 'the easinesse of mysticall Divinity' which would require Cusa to 'expound these wonders which are revealed above and beyond the sight of sence, reason and understanding'. The text, originally written for the Benedictine monks of Tegernsee, even loyally retained its opening remark of 'my dearly beloved Brethren'. Echoing Pseudo-Dionysius again, the introduction claimed the text would:

Bring you experimentally into the most sacred darknesse where while you shall be feeling and perceiving the presence of the unapproachable light, every one of you shall attempt in the best man that God shall give you leave continually to come neerer and neerer and here by a most sweet morsell to foretast that supper of eternall happinesse, whereunto we are called in the word of life by the Gospell of Christ blessed for evermore.<sup>447</sup>

Randall's final text was the *Theologia Germanica. Or, Mysticall divinitie* (1646).<sup>448</sup> With this, the trinity of mystical writings promoted by Randall was completed. This work had been controversial before according to Randall, having been monopolized by individuals fearful that the people 'should grow as wise, if not wiser then their Teachers'. It had 'walked up and down this City in Manuscripts at deer rates, from hand to hand' but was now under the safe conduct of the printers. It had finally ceased being 'the other to our own Countrymen' and exposed the 'famous lights or lamps kindled in other Regions'.<sup>449</sup> The reader was challenged to play their role and 'read, seriously to weigh, spiritually to discern, and piously to use and reduce into practice and life'. Randall concluded by asking the reader to 'taste and see how sweet, how full of life and marrow' the work was, to play host to the 'German stranger' who arrived at the twilight of the understanding, but brought about a new sunrise before he departed, showing 'the Spirit and Angel of Gods Truth in it'.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid., sigs. A4<sup>r</sup>-A10<sup>v</sup> (unpaginated pages).

<sup>447</sup> Ibid. 'An Introduction'.

<sup>448</sup> A manuscript copy is in Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 26.

<sup>449</sup> Giles Randall, *Theologia Germanica. Or, Mysticall Divinitie* (London, 1648), sigs. A2<sup>v</sup>- A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., sigs. A3<sup>v</sup>-A4<sup>v</sup>.

The text itself described the renewal of man and his return to God, having fallen due to original sin. It advocated the surrendering of the individual's will for the sake of the will of God, and through this surrender the individual would be restored and returned to God. Through the abandoning of the senses, reason and perception of everything earthly, the individual could 'pass out of thy self, and from the knowledge of all these things' and 'come into that one unity of him who is above all nature and knowledg'.<sup>451</sup> The 'old man' was represented by Adam, encompassing disobedience and selfishness, while the 'new man' was 'Christ and obedience'. The more obedient and the closer to Christ the individual was, the more they were rewarded with grace and salvation. Thus 'the neerer any man approacheth to this obedience, so much the less sin is in him'.<sup>452</sup> The end goal was that 'we may depart from ourselves and being dead to our own wills, live only to God, and the performance of his will'.<sup>453</sup>

Attached to the end of the text were 'Certain grave sayings, by which the diligent Schollar of Christ may search into himself, and know what is to be sought and strived for concerning the true inward uniting of himself to the one supream good'.<sup>454</sup> These meditative sayings were the *Hauptreden* of Hans Denck and appeared in Randall's edition due to the fact that Sebastian Castellio had used Ludwig Haetzer's German edition of the *Theologia Germanica* from 1528 in his Latin edition of 1558. Both Denck and Haetzer were part of the Augsburg Anabaptist community. Denck featuring in the edition produced by Haetzer, only to be preserved in the Latin and then English translations, gives context to Randall's edition.<sup>455</sup> Also featured was 'The Communication of Doctor Thaulerus with a poor beggar' which again reaffirmed the benefits of mystical theology.<sup>456</sup> These phrases, attributed to Tauler, first appeared in English in a 1613 edition of Francis de Sales's *An Introduction to a Devout Life* (1613).<sup>457</sup>

The *Theologia Germanica*, Nicholas of Cusa's *De Visione Dei* and Benet of Canfield's *The Rule of Perfection* all advocated some form of mystical theology and all were intended, as we have seen from each of Randall's introductory epistles, to be read and acted upon. This generated additional fears of Familism from Benjamin Bourne and Robert

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-38.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>455</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 255; Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, pp. 14-60.

<sup>456</sup> Randall, *Theologia Germanica*, pp. 146-50.

<sup>457</sup> Francis de Sales, *An introduction to a devoute life composed in Frenche by the R. Father in God Francis Sales* (Douai, 1613). Details of the origins of these smaller extracts are taken from Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p. 199.

Baylie, who had read the *Theologia Germanica*.<sup>458</sup> Bourne's *The description and confutation of mysticall Anti-Christ* (1646) outlined the error of thinking man could become 'all things in God, with ten thousand times more', referencing both the *Theologia Germanica* and *A Bright Starre*.<sup>459</sup> Other references appeared when confuting Familist teachings on issues such as the Passion, the role of sin, transcending reason, acknowledging God through Christ, the resurrection, and the Antichrist.<sup>460</sup> Claiming to have 'the fulnesse of the Godhead with him', directly referencing the *Theologica Germanica*, was 'cunning Sophistry, devilish Philosophie, being nothing but a proud, selfish, vain imagination'.<sup>461</sup> Baylie's *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (1645) argued against the chiliastic and millenarian element of some Independent's beliefs as being based on 'Mysticall and exceeding obscure termes', while in *Anabaptism* (1647) he attacked Randall personally for printing works by 'Popish Priests, the one by a Dutch Frier, and the other by an English Capuchine'.<sup>462</sup> These works encouraged Familism by 'pretending to the highest degree of holy, very high and hardly intelligible contemplations; the fittest morsel that could have been prepared for the giddy multitude, who is most ready to be caught with any new sublime and subtile notions, were they never so full of deadly poyson'. Randall himself had apparently preached that there was no resurrection, heaven, or hell after this life, that the saints were fully perfect and became God, and that the historical passages of Scripture were mere allegory. The works of mystical theology were blamed for teaching God was in all creatures, that all actions and sins were from the will of the spirit of God, that good and evil angels were simply good and evil motions in the mind of man, that nothing remains forever but God, and that Scripture is 'a meer shadow, a false History'.<sup>463</sup> In the mind of his critics, Randall was using Catholic texts of mystical theology as the basis for his heretical teachings. For Randall himself they apparently laid open the path to God and deserved to be made public for that very reason. Mystical theology in the 1630s and 1640s was either a sublime pathway to God and knowledge of salvation, or a nonsensical Popish invention fanning the flames of Familism, antinomianism and heresy that were seen to be spreading across England.

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<sup>458</sup> Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, pp. 256-58; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>459</sup> Benjamin Bourne, *The description and confutation of mysticall Anti-Christ, the Familists* (London, 1646), p. 5.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 22-3, 37, 38, 43, 45.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>462</sup> Baylie, *A dissuasive from the errours of the time*, p. 234.

<sup>463</sup> Robert Baylie, *Anabaptism, the true fountaine of independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisome, and the most of the other errours, which for the time due trouble the Church of England, unsealed* (London, 1647), pp. 102-3.

## Conclusion

If we return to the start of this chapter and Richard Carpenter's desire to see mystical theology imported into England, we can see that works of that nature had become readily available in the 1640s. There was an ongoing identification of a canon of 'mystical divines' and a growing acknowledgement that they represented the teachings of mystical theology. But whereas Carpenter saw them as being able to prevent the English 'altogether sinking within themselves', many in the 1640s saw them as encouraging further decline into heresy and chaos. By focusing on writers which emerged from the shared cultural inheritance of Puritanism, which itself had an inheritance of Catholic contemplative and devotional writing, we have seen the diverse ways mystical theology featured in the works of Francis Rous, John Everard and Giles Randall. The conclusions these writers came to using this source material varied intensely; from reassurance of election and inspiration to lead a godly and lawful life, to knowledge of perfection on earth and freedom from moral law. In the growing awareness of 'mystical divines' as a canon of writers, we see the variety of ways the writers in this canon were assimilated into existing belief systems and encouraged further spiritual development.

This chapter has focused on the strongest examples of works of mystical theology being adapted by groups emerging from the Puritan milieu, but this is not to say that it is the only example of such in the mid-decades of the seventeenth century. More work needs to be done on the Ranters' concept of the obliteration of the self before the presence of God.<sup>464</sup> Many scholars have hinted at some kind of 'mysticism' among sects such as the Ranters, but whether this is due to the genuine influence of mystical theology, or the misapplication of the term 'mysticism' remains to be seen.<sup>465</sup> Indeed the diverse influences at work in these groups are still being discovered, as Nicholas McDowell's recent reconstruction of links between Abiezer Coppe, John Saltmarsh, and the Laudian and later Catholic poet Richard Crashaw has shown.<sup>466</sup> Numerous other examples present themselves, one being Randall's *A*

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<sup>464</sup> Describing a defined group as 'Ranters' is of course contested, see J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>465</sup> B. Reay notes a more general 'retreat in mysticism' in the 1650s, Nigel Smith talks of a Ranter 'mystical strain of writing', A.L. Morton claims the group drew on 'a mystical pantheism', and Norman Cohn labels them 'mystical anarchists' of 'mystical amorality', describes Joseph Salmon as a 'mystic' and discusses their 'mystical or quasi-mystical experiences'; B. Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction', in B. Reay & J.F. McGregor (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 1-22, p. 19; Nigel Smith (ed.), *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Junction Books, 1983), p. 6; A.L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 17; Norman Cohn, 'The Ranters: The "Underground" in the England of 1650', *Encounter*, Vol. 34 (1970), pp. 15-24, pp. 15, 18, 21.

<sup>466</sup> Nicholas McDowell, 'The Beauty of Holiness and the Poetics of Antinomianism: Richard Crashaw, John Saltmarsh and the Language of Religious Radicalism in the 1640s', in Hessayon and



*Bright Starre* influencing John Rogers's move from Presbyterianism to Independency in 1646, showing a Catholic work to have enormous influence.<sup>467</sup> The New Model Army General John Lambert is another example. While on campaign in Scotland in 1651 he received copies of Juan de Valdés's *Divine Considerations*, produced by the circle at Little Gidding, and a copy of the *Theologia Germanica* edited by Randall.<sup>468</sup> Thus in the hands of the second-in-command of the army was a Catholic work translated by Nicholas Ferrar with a recommendation from George Herbert, a product of the 'Arminian nunnery' at Little Gidding, and a work produced by a notorious antinomian and 'Famelist'.<sup>469</sup> Works of mystical theology were to be found in the hands of many of different religious persuasions, and produced an even greater variety of results. It is entirely possible that unrecorded enthusiasm for mystical theology was more common than has been assumed among those Robert Rich referred to as the 'Friends to the Bridegroom', which included Everard, Randall, John Saltmarsh, Henry Vane the younger, George Fox, James Naylor, Joseph Salmon, Abiezer Coppe and John Pordage, among others.<sup>470</sup>

The next chapter explores how mystical theology was used by Anglican writers in the Interregnum and Restoration to smear both Catholics and sectarians as 'enthusiasts'. Using prevalent medical theories on melancholy, they sought to show that the Church of England was a necessary shield against the dual threat of sectarian delusion and Catholic superstition. By developing a rhetoric of enthusiasm they could discredit the sorts of ecstatic experiences Everard and Randall promoted. We will also explore how mystical theology was viewed as heathen philosophy which had been mistakenly absorbed into Christian doctrine and was used to discredit Catholic claims to doctrinal authority via revelation. Finally we will explore the attitudes of some of the 'Cambridge Platonists' towards mystical theology, many of whom shared Randall's and Everard's interest in the spirituality of the *Theologia Germanica*.

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Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context*, pp. 31-49. McDowell notes the influence of devotional verse and the works of Jesuit and Counter-Reformation writers which featured in the curriculum at Cambridge in the 1630s and 40s (p. 40).

<sup>467</sup> Richard L. Greaves, 'Rogers, John (b. 1627)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23983>, accessed 9 March 2015]. Greaves suggests that reading *A Bright Starre* may have triggered a 'deepening sense of spirituality'. Rogers spoke of being 'swallowed up in such an *annihilation* and *Enochian* life' and referenced Randall directly in *Ohel or Beth-shemesh A tabernacle for the sun, or, Irenicum evangelicum* (London, 1653), p. 382.

<sup>468</sup> British Library Add. MS 21426, fol. 349<sup>r</sup>. Hessayon first suggested this was *Divine Considerations* in his article "'The Teutonicks Writings'", p. 142.

<sup>469</sup> The identification of these texts containing similar substance may explain why Samuel Rutherford links the works of Valdés and Randall together as 'the grounds and poysonable principles of *Familisme, Antinomianisme, Enthusiasme*' in his *A Survey Of The Spirituall Antichrist*, p. 164.

<sup>470</sup> Robert Rich, *Love without dissimulation, or, The letter & directions of Robert Rich to M. John Raynes, for the distributing his benevolence to the seven churches in London* (London, 1667), pp. 6-7.

### Chapter 3: Enthusiasm, Melancholy and Mystical Theology

The scrupulous man must avoid *those companies*, and those *employments*, and those *books* from whence the clouds arise, especially the books of ineffective and phantastick notion, such as are *Legends of Saints*, *ridiculously* and *weakly invented*, furnished out for *Idea's*, not for actions of common life, with dreams and false propositions [...] Such also are the Books of *mystical Theology*, which have in them the most high, the most troublesome, and the most mysterious nothings in the world, and little better then the effluxes of a *religious madness*.<sup>471</sup>

Mystical theology had a very specific, and negative, connotation to those who sought to defend the Church of England in the seventeenth century. The English Civil Wars proved to be a pivotal moment in the linking of mystical theology with sectarianism and Catholicism. The 1640s and 1650s were the decades in which mystical theology was exposed to a much wider audience than it had previously experienced; radical antinomians published translations of mystical works, Presbyterian heresiographers labelled it a sectarian fanaticism based on ‘popish error’, and Serenus Cressy and Benedictine authors edited and published the works of Augustine Baker, among others, to show the sanctity of Catholic spirituality.<sup>472</sup> This chapter deals with the consequences of this exposé by suggesting that mystical theology became a rhetorical tool through which those seeking to defend the Church of England against the twofold threat of Catholicism and sectarianism could deploy their arguments. It became a vessel through which all manner of enthusiasm could be exaggerated. This found particular fruition in the writings of Latitudinarians such as Edward Stillingfleet, who saw enthusiasm, fanaticism and superstition as the ‘unreasonable’ characteristics of sectarians and Catholics, more of which will be explored in Chapter 4 in his debates with Serenus Cressy.<sup>473</sup>

As the opening quote suggests, some Anglican writers went out of their way to condemn what they saw as ‘enthusiastic’ religious practices. In 1660 Jeremy Taylor advised his readers on how to avoid ‘unquietness or restlessness of the mind’. This restlessness came from aspiring to virtues not suited to the common life, whereby men did not eat for fear of gluttony, sleep for fear of sleeping too much, or marry and ‘doe their duty’ with their wives for fear it was ‘an indulgence of the flesh’.<sup>474</sup> These scruples could come from a variety of

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<sup>471</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium, or, The rule of conscience in all her generall measures serving as a great instrument for the determination of cases of conscience: in four books* (London, 1660), p. 219.

<sup>472</sup> For Cressy’s debates over mystical theology, see Chapter 4 below.

<sup>473</sup> Martin I.J. Griffin, Jr., *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 53-59. See also Jackson I. Cope, “‘The Cupri-Cosmits’: Glanvill on Latitudinarian Anti-Enthusiasm”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1954), pp. 269-86. For the conflicting and fluid understandings of ‘reason’ see Hill, “‘Reason’ and ‘Reasonableness’” in *Seventeenth-Century England*.

<sup>474</sup> Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, p. 208.

sources: sleepless nights, a troubled head, or melancholy. This resulted in the fall of the rational faculties into 'irresolution and restlessness'. More frequent in women and 'monastic persons', it was caused by excess in religious exercises or indiscreet fasting.<sup>475</sup> The reader was to avoid reading the lives of saints and trying to uphold themselves to such strict discipline. These virtuous people were literary constructs furnished out of ideals- they made a fine picture, but were like no-one alive. Common people should above all else avoid works of mystical theology, which contained in them the 'effluxes of a religious madness'. 'Religion is best', Taylor insisted, when 'incorporated with the actions and common traverses of our life', rather than aspiring to some unobtainable goal.<sup>476</sup>

Attacks on mystical theology were common among those seeking to defend the High Church in Restoration England after the commotion of the Civil Wars. Episcopacy had been formally abolished in 1646 by Parliament, with bishops already having their powers limited by the Bishops' Exclusion Act of 1642. Parliament took a more piecemeal approach to abolishing the bishops, despite popular association of 'Laudianism' with 'Popery', resulting in some leniency of conditions.<sup>477</sup> Throughout the Interregnum 'popular Anglicanism' was kept alive through episcopal scholars and churchmen protected by the landed classes.<sup>478</sup> For those surviving Church of England Episcopalians, particularly the circles surrounding Henry Hammond, John Pearson and Peter Heylyn, the Interregnum was a period of formulating wide ranging and resolute defences of the pre-1640 Church of England, along with finding ways to counteract both Presbyterian and Catholic attacks.<sup>479</sup> The Church of England thus survived as a religious community that historians have labelled as distinctly 'Anglican'. By the time of the Restoration in 1660, these Anglican writers had matured and developed their ability to defend episcopacy and the national Church with a renewed sense of purpose and confidence.<sup>480</sup> They also had to find ways to counteract Catholic readings of the downfall of the Church of England as divine providence; that the English Reformation had been proved a schism and the Church of England no 'true

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., pp. 218-19.

<sup>477</sup> Peter King, 'The episcopate during the Civil Wars, 1642- 49', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 328 (1968), pp. 523-37, pp. 523-24.

<sup>478</sup> Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution', in McGregor & Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, p. 8.

<sup>479</sup> John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646- 1689* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 11; Paul Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 64-65. For Heylyn and the Laudian defences of the Interregnum, see Calvin Lane, *The Laudians and the Elizabethan Church: History, Conformity and Religious Identity in Post-Reformation England* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), chs. 4 and 5.

<sup>480</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church*, p. xiv.

Church'.<sup>481</sup> The resulting engagement with mystical theology took two forms. Firstly, it sought to prove it was a Catholic enthusiasm which had been accepted as doctrine and thus prove Catholicism to be a 'false church'. It also tried to link Catholicism and sectarianism together to strengthen the position of the Church of England as the rational, scripturally based true Church in contrast to this dual threat.<sup>482</sup>

Yet anti-Catholicism linked both those within the Church of England and outside of it in their joint condemnation of mystical theology, and for this reason the Scottish Presbyterian Alexander Pitcarne echoed many of Taylor's earlier concerns in his critique. In *The Spiritual Sacrifice* (1664) he posed the question of whether a person could ever be 'too spiritual' or enlarged in prayer, a query he stated would seem ridiculous if it was not for some 'popish zelots in their mystical theology' who had 'exceeded all bounds' and fallen into 'gross *euthusiasme*'. The rhetoric is largely the same; the Catholic followers of mystical theology were prone to receiving 'enthusiastick raptures' along with experiencing 'rapture and exstasie' in their religious practice.<sup>483</sup> It seems Pitcarne had more than a passing knowledge of mystical theology, describing it as a process by which the 'soul may be so much affected with, and drowned in that heavenly contemplation, as that all the acts both of the mind and will are suspended, and cease'. He also identified 'the father of their mystical theology' as 'the supposititious *Dionysius*' and cited his work directly. Although very much a negative account that was part of a wider anti-papal theme of his work, Pitcarne possessed a depth of understanding about the characteristics of mystical theology. Despite this he came to the same conclusion as many, labelling it as a 'childish dream' and reassuring his reader that they should be absorbed in prayer, but also be aware that experiences taken to be 'the breathing of the spirit' may not be heavenly, but rather sent by Satan to 'divert and cheat us of the present duty'.<sup>484</sup>

The main narrative of this chapter reveals how various writers defending the Church of England, especially Robert Burton, Meric Casaubon and Henry Dodwell, all used the

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<sup>481</sup> Jacqueline Rose has suggested that Hammond wrote 'with an eye more on Rome than Geneva' when justifying the Reformation, episcopacy and royal supremacy in her *Godly Kingship in Restoration England: The Politics of The Royal Supremacy, 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 83. For more on Hammond see John William Packer, *The Transformation of Anglicanism, 1643-1660: With Special Reference to Henry Hammond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969).

<sup>482</sup> John Spurr argues that this new found emphasis on rationality over enthusiasm was the attempt of 'an entire generation to distance itself from what was regarded as the irrationalism of the Puritan Revolution' in his "'Rational Religion" in Restoration England', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (1988), pp. 563-85, p. 564.

<sup>483</sup> Alexander Pitcarne, *The spiritual sacrifice, or, A treatise wherein several weighty questions and cases concerning the saints communion with God in prayer are propounded and practically improved* (Edinburgh, 1664), p. 548.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 650.

rhetoric of enthusiasm and the concept of mystical theology to great effect.<sup>485</sup> It allowed them to exaggerate the dangerous threat both sectarianism and Catholicism posed to the national Church, an argument many would agree with after the chaos of the Civil Wars in which, in the memorable words of Christopher Hill, the ‘God within sometimes looked like a god of pure anarchy’.<sup>486</sup> It was also part of a much larger attack on the authority Catholicism gave to tradition, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter of this study. Finding any chink in the armour of infallibility helped Protestant scholars weaken Catholic claims to be the ‘true church’ and reaffirmed the sanctity of the Reformation.<sup>487</sup> Mystical theology thus became a way to present what was held as revelation of doctrine throughout history by Catholics to be enthusiasm, melancholy and madness. In this endeavor men from all sides of the religious spectrum in England were united. The essentially scholarly endeavor of attacking Catholicism through its sources brought the role and authority of Pseudo-Dionysius into dispute and allowed writers to criticize Catholicism as holding doctrines that were formed from pagan beliefs and fundamentally ‘anti-Christian’. Indeed popery was seen as worse than paganism, as it was a debasement of Christ’s teachings, and many Protestant writers sought to show that Catholicism had slowly remodeled Christian religion to first permit, and then license their worldly interests and pleasures.<sup>488</sup> Finally to counter-balance this, we turn to the reception of mystical theology among the ‘Cambridge Platonists’, who took Plato and Plotinus, those attacked as ‘anti-Christian’ by contemporaries, as central to their theology.

### **Melancholy and Robert Burton**

Robert Burton provides a useful starting point to explore how the rhetoric of enthusiasm and theories concerning melancholy could be used to attack groups seen as a threat to the established Church. In Burton’s case this attack was aimed at Catholics and Puritans.<sup>489</sup> Burton was highly influential across the seventeenth century and understanding his role in the developing rhetoric of enthusiasm allows for a better understanding of how mystical

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<sup>485</sup> This complements Michael Heyd’s criticism that most scholarly work tends to focus on the breakaway groups, rather than those levelling enthusiasm at them, see his ‘The Reaction to Enthusiasm’, p. 259.

<sup>486</sup> Christopher Hill, ‘God and the English Revolution’, *History Workshop*, No. 17 (1984), pp. 19-31, p. 20. See also J.C. Davis, ‘Living with the living God: radical religion and the English Revolution’, in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds.), *Religion in the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 19-41.

<sup>487</sup> J.A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). See Champion’s assertion that ‘history was an essential means for making moral defences of ideological positions’ (p. 21).

<sup>488</sup> Robin Clifton, ‘Fear of Popery’, in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 144-67, p. 146.

<sup>489</sup> For the evolution of melancholy into a polemical tool, see Michael Heyd, ‘Robert Burton’s Sources on Enthusiasm and Melancholy: From a Medical Tradition to Religious Controversy’, *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1984), pp. 17-44.

theology was linked to enthusiasm and used to defend the Church of England.<sup>490</sup> Before we tackle this subject, we must define exactly what these terms meant to those using them in the seventeenth century. ‘Enthusiasm’ was understood to mean ‘an inspiration, a ravishment of the spirit, divine motion, Poetical fury’, while ‘Enthusiast’ meant ‘a Sect of people that thought themselves inspired with a Divine Spirit, and to have a clear sight of all things they believed’.<sup>491</sup> Both drew on the original Greek term *enthousiasmos*, meaning infusion and inspiration, or an inpouring of the divine through possession, although the term was not originally negative in its connotations.<sup>492</sup> Melancholy was a much more established term in the seventeenth century. Its dictionary definition was:

*Melancholy (melancholia)* black choler caused by adustion of the blood; also sadness, pensiveness, solitariness. *Melancholy* is by Physicians reckoned for one of the four humors of mans body, and resembles the Earth, as *Choler* doth the fire; *Blood* the air; *Phlegm* the water. It is said to be the grossest of all four, which, if it abound too much, causeth heaviness and sadness of mind.<sup>493</sup>

Much of the seventeenth-century understanding of melancholy was inherited from classical authors, especially from the works of Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna, who taught that melancholy resulted from an imbalance of black bile in the four humours of the body. From the earliest Hippocratic writings, melancholy was seen to involve states of fear and sadness, and this varied little in the centuries afterwards.<sup>494</sup> In this classical system one of the four humours would predispose a person towards a certain personality and linked humoral type. A ‘natural melancholy’ resulted from the predominance of the melancholy humour. An ‘unnatural melancholy’ arose from excess melancholic humours being burned by the heating processes caused by overexcitement of the passions, poor diet or fever.<sup>495</sup>

Such ‘unnatural melancholy’ could also be caused by a malfunction of what were

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<sup>490</sup> For later influences see George Williamson, ‘The Restoration Revolt Against Enthusiasm’, *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1933), pp. 571-603; C.M. Webster, ‘Swift’s *Tale of a Tub* Compared with Earlier Satires of the Puritans’, *PMLA*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1932), pp. 171-78; idem., ‘Swift and Some Earlier Satirists of Puritan Enthusiasm’, *PMLA*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (1933), pp. 1141-53; idem., ‘The Satiric Background of the Attack on the Puritan’s in Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub*’, *PMLA*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1935), pp. 210-23; Thomas L. Canavan, ‘Robert Burton, Jonathan Swift, and the Tradition of Anti-Puritan Invective’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1973), pp. 227-42; Michael Heyd, ‘*Be Sober and Reasonable*’: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

<sup>491</sup> Blount, *Glossographia*, sig. P<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>492</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 1/2 (1997), pp. 7-28, pp. 9-10.

<sup>493</sup> Blount, *Glossographia*, sig. Bb3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>494</sup> Jennifer Radden (ed.), *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>495</sup> Clark Lawlor, ‘Fashionable Melancholy’, in Allan Ingram, Stuart Sim, Clark Lawlor, Richard Terry, John Baker and Leigh Wetherall-Dickson (eds.), *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century: Before Depression, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 25-51, p. 27.

termed the ‘hypochondriacal organs’ such as the spleen and liver. Melancholy could be the product of the failure of the spleen to remove black bile from the blood. This undigested black bile then heated up and produced vapours which rose to the brain. These vapours disrupted the ‘animal spirits’ that connected the mind and the senses, clouding the images passing through the brain and causing hallucinations and illusions.<sup>496</sup> Such a theory would remain popular throughout the seventeenth century and was only slowly replaced by newer theories of nerves, fibres and chemical imbalances.<sup>497</sup> The proof of such influence is apparent in the word itself; the Greek *melaina chole* was translated into Latin as *atra bilis* and into English as *black bile*.<sup>498</sup> Classical moral philosophy thought the problem to be with the mind itself, and therefore the condition was also viewed as one that could be caused by unchecked emotions which, when corrected, would allow the individual to achieve peace of mind.<sup>499</sup>

Theories of melancholy and enthusiasm were frequently applied to Puritans. An example of such is the work of Thomas Nashe in the late Elizabethan period. Nashe was one of the most famous and prominent Elizabethan pamphleteers and defended the Church of England during the ‘Martin Marprelate’ controversy in which episcopacy was challenged. In 1586 Archbishop Bancroft had introduced episcopal censorship on all published material through the Star Chamber Decree on Printing, which subsequently targeted Puritan presses printing Presbyterian attacks on the rights of bishops. The presses moved throughout a Puritan underground and continued to print the Martin texts, which generated several replies from leading defenders of episcopacy.<sup>500</sup> Nashe’s *The Terrors of the Night* (1594) lamented the spread of melancholy as a certain ‘distemperment’ of the brain that caused disturbing episodes and unusual behaviour. Some believed themselves to be birds and beasts with feathers and horns, while others believed they had been turned into glass. So common were these beliefs that ‘Phisitions in their circuit everie day meet with far more ridiculous

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>497</sup> Clark Lawlor, *From Melancholia to Prozac: A History of Depression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 43. Lawlor argues that this was a shift from the ‘Galenic humoral model to the New Science’ whereby ‘mechanistic and chemical ideas of flows that might be blocked, or chemical imbalances that should be corrected’ took hold.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>499</sup> Jeremy Schmidt, ‘Melancholy and the Therapeutic Language of Moral Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Thought’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2004), pp. 583-601, p. 584; idem., *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>500</sup> Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 71-73. For the wider context of Nashe see the essays in Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton, and Steve Mentz (eds.), *The Age of Thomas Nashe: Text, Bodies and Trespasses of Authorship in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

experience'.<sup>501</sup> He described how:

Sundry times wee behold whole Armies of men skirmishing in the Ayre, Dragons, wilde beasts, bloody streamers, blasing Commets, firie strakes with other apparitions innumerable, whence have all these their conglomerate matter but from fuming meteors that arise from the earth, so from the fuming melancholly of our spleene mounteth that hot matter into the higher Region of the braine, whereof manie fearfull visions are framed. Our reason even like drunken fumes it displaceth and intoxicates, & yeelds up our intellectuie apprehension to be mocked and troden under foote, by everie false obiect or counterset noyse that comes neere it.<sup>502</sup>

Nashe had emerged from Cambridge with a classical education and a strong dislike and suspicion of Puritanism.<sup>503</sup> He was part of a much larger group of writers who sought to prove Puritanism was the source of such madness and argued that Puritan ministers were provoking such behavior by preaching about the perils of damnation and the rigors of salvation. Far from beneficial, such sermons were shattering the mental composure of their audiences.<sup>504</sup> For Nashe Puritanism was a catalyst for the continuing spread of melancholy, and he warned the reader that 'the divell of late is growen a puritane'.<sup>505</sup>

Such views grew in popularity as the perceived threat of Puritanism became more and more apparent to many in the Jacobean period. One of the greatest writings on the topic was Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621. Burton was alarmed by the threat to ecclesiastical and civil harmony that he thought Puritanism represented and declared Puritans to be suffering from 'religious melancholy', which was spreading throughout the population by their fiery preaching. Their deluded imaginations were prompting resistance to the rituals and authorities of the established Church and were therefore the root of instability within the Church of England.<sup>506</sup> Burton attempted to present conformity as the correct course of action, constructing moderate orthodoxy as a *via media* between the extremes of deluded Puritanism and the superstition of Roman Catholicism.<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> Thomas Nashe, *The terrors of the night or, A discourse of apparitions* (London, 1594), sig. Cijj<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs. Cij<sup>v</sup>- Cijj<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>503</sup> Charles Nicholl, 'Nashe, Thomas (bap. 1567, d. c.1601)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19790, accessed 13 Aug 2013]

<sup>504</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 224. For an analysis of the content of Puritan sermons, see William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), ch. 5.

<sup>505</sup> Nashe, *The terrors of the night*, sig. Eijj<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>506</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 223.

<sup>507</sup> Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 159. For more on superstition see the essays in Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (eds.), *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chs. 10, 11 & 13; *idem.*, 'For Reasoned Faith or Embattled Creed? Religion for the People in Early Modern Europe', in Helen Parish (ed.), *Superstition and Magic in Early Modern Europe: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 34-51.



Burton believed that melancholy was to be found everywhere and in ‘all superstitious Idolaters, Ethnicks, Mahometans, Jews, Hereticks, Euthusiasts, Divinators, Prophets, Sectaries, and Scismaticks’.<sup>508</sup>

Burton defined melancholy as ‘a kinde of dotage, without any feaver, having for his ordinary companions, feare and sadnesse, without any apparant occasion’. He continued on to explain:

We properly call that *Dotage*, as *Laurentius* interprets it, *when some one principall faculty of the minde, as Imagination, or Reason is corrupted, as all Melancholy persons have*. It is without a Feaver, because the humor is most part colde and dry, contrary to putrefaction. *Feare* and *Sorrow* are the true Characters, and inseparable companions of *Melancholy*, as hereafter shall be declared.<sup>509</sup>

Many identified the characteristics of Puritanism with such a description. For the ‘arduous journey through despair and anxiety to the final security of salvation’ was commonplace in Puritan works, especially spiritual autobiographies such as that of John Bunyan.<sup>510</sup> But Burton also hinted at the influences of classical medical texts in his mentioning of the humours, along with the reference to Laurentius, or André Du Laurens, physician to the king of France and Professor of Medicine at the University of Montpellier whose work had been translated into English in 1599.<sup>511</sup>

Burton believed Catholicism was also guilty of superstition and melancholy. He gave particular focus to the pre-Reformation period of English history, which he saw as dominated by Catholic error. Burton argued that fasting was the prime cause of most superstition, and that those who practiced it too intensely or without restraint unbalanced their humours and bodily temperatures. He insisted that ‘never any strange illusion of devils amongst Hermits, Anachorites, never any visions, phantasmes, apparitions, Enthusiasmes, Prophets, any revelations, but immoderate fasting, bad diet, sicknesse, melancholy, solitarinesse, or some such things were the precedent causes, the forerunners or concomitantes of them’.<sup>512</sup> Catholicism was guilty of idolatry and superstition by validating the visions and experiences of those who had been affected by unbalanced humours and bad

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<sup>508</sup> Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy what it is. With all the kindes, causes, symptomes, prognostickes, and severall cures of it. In three maine partitions with their severall sections, members, and subsections. Philosophically, medicinally, historically, opened and cut up. By Democritus Junior. With a satyricall preface, conducing to the following discourse.* (Oxford, 1621), p. 707.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>510</sup> Stuart Sim, ‘Despair, Melancholy and the Novel’, in Allan Ingram et al., (eds.), *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*, pp. 114-41, p. 115.

<sup>511</sup> André Du Laurens, *A discourse of the preseruation of the sight: of melancholike diseases; of rheumes, and of old age. Composed by M. Andreas Laurentius, ordinarie phisition to the King, and publike professor of phisicke in the Universitie of Mompelier. Translated out of French into English, according to the last edition, by Richard Surphlet, practitioner in phisicke* (London, 1599).

<sup>512</sup> Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), p. 735.

diet. Monasticism was particularly satirized, and it is no surprise that editions of Burton's work from 1628 onwards contained a frontispiece which featured a monk kneeling with rosary beads in hand under the title of 'Superstitious'. The accompanying verse revealed how:

Beneath them kneeling on his knee,  
A Superstitious man you see:  
He fastes, prayes, on's Idole fixt,  
Tormented hope and feare betwixt:  
For hell perhaps he takes more paine,  
Then thou dost, Heaven itselke to gaine.  
Alas poore Soule, I pittie thee,  
What starre inclin'd thee so to be?<sup>513</sup>

Catholic superstition was the reason why true religion had been eclipsed and the truth of the Scriptures concealed. Under Catholicism the English had spent their 'times, goods, lives, fortunes, in such ridiculous observations, their tales and figments, false miracles, buying and selling of pardons, Indulgences for 40000 yeares to come, their Processions on set dayes, their strict fastings, Monks, Anachorits, Frier Mendicants, Franciscans, Carthusians, &c'.<sup>514</sup> Burton attacked the Catholic 'vigils and feasts', saints days, and their belief in exorcisms as 'Grecian, Pagan, Mahometan supersitions' which they had altered only in name. Catholics also preferred tradition to Scripture and kept to vows of poverty and obedience rather than God's true commandments. They had brought common people into ignorance and blindness to the point that they believed it was 'a greater sinne to eat a bit of meat in Lent, then kill a man' and would thus obey whatever was decreed as tradition. This could even extend to killing a king, which made Catholics so dangerous because they 'perform all, doe all, beleeeve all'.<sup>515</sup> This was the ultimate tyranny of the Catholic Church. While the 'ruder sort' were 'carried headlong with blind zeale' and tortured by their superstitions, the Pope and his cardinals 'laugh in their sleeves, and are merry in their chambers'. The 'middle sort' were 'Schoolmen, Canonists, and Jesuits, Friers, Orators, Sophisters' who defended the Pope out of fear or hope of preferential treatment, and defended miracles, transubstantiation, indulgences, purgatory and the mass. All had continued this way in 'error, blindnes, decrees, sophismes, and superstitions, idle ceremonies and traditions' until Luther had restored the

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<sup>513</sup> Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy. What it is, with all the kinds causes, symptomes, prognostickes, & severall cures of it. In three partitions, with their severall sections, members & subsections. Philosophically, medicinally, historically, opened & cut up. By. Democritus Iunior. With a satyricall preface, conducing to the following discourse.* (Oxford, 1632), unpaginated page entitled 'The Argument of the Frontispiece [sic]'.  
<sup>514</sup> Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), p. 753.  
<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 754.

true primitive Church and drove out the ‘foggy mists of superstition’.<sup>516</sup>

Burton lamented that this process had generated new heretics in England. These were sectarians who, in their desire to rid themselves of Catholic superstition, had incorrectly rejected all ceremonies, fast days, Church music, bishops and Church government. These were led only by what their ‘owne phantasticall spirits dictate’. Some believed themselves to be ‘of the privy councill with God himselfe, and know all his secrets’, while others predicted when the world would end down to the very day. These were Anabaptists, Brownists, Barrowists and Familists, all enthusiasts who threatened England much like the ‘mad men of *Munster in Germany*’. ‘What greater madnesse can there be’ asked Burton, ‘then for a man to take upon him to be God?’<sup>517</sup> This was the dual threat enthusiasm posed to the Church of England. Catholic superstition sought to ensnare minds and make them slaves to tradition and idols. Sectarians threated the very existence of the Church by separating themselves, believing themselves to be divine or having knowledge of God that was not available through the established Church. Burton condemned both equally with the rhetoric of enthusiasm:

What are all our *Anabaptists, Brownists, Barrowists, Familists*, but a company of rude illiterate base fellowes? What are most of our Papists, but rude and ignorant blind baiards, how should they otherwise be? when as they are brought up and kept still in darknesse [...] being so misled all their lives in superstition, & carried hood-winked like so many hawks, how can they prove otherwise then blind Idiots, and superstitious Asses: what shall we expect else at their hands.<sup>518</sup>

Burton laid the groundwork for a powerful defence against Catholics and sectarians. During the English Civil Wars, with the rise of group such as the Quakers, this explanation became a popular way of discrediting their beliefs. Referencing medical explanations such as that of Burton, many smeared the religious enthusiasm of such groups as nothing more than madness. The increasing popularity of secular medical writings about melancholy and the governing elite’s horror of political and religious radicalism converged in the seventeenth century into the rhetoric of enthusiasm that would emerge fully in the Interregnum and Restoration periods.<sup>519</sup> This built on an already existing view that melancholy was an epidemic, seen everywhere and felt by almost everyone across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In England it was persistent throughout the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth and regularly lamented by divines and scholars.<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid., p. 756.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., p. 731.

<sup>519</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 156.

<sup>520</sup> Angus Gowland, ‘The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy’, *Past & Present*, No. 191 (2006), pp.

## Meric Casaubon and Mystical Theology

Meric Casaubon was the earliest writer to combine this with an attack on mystical theology. He drew heavily on the medical interpretation of enthusiasm made popular by Burton to do so.<sup>521</sup> Casaubon was an Anglo-French scholar born in Geneva who had slowly climbed the ecclesiastical ranks in early Stuart England, being made Doctor of Divinity at Oxford by Charles I in August 1636.<sup>522</sup> By 1654 Casaubon had retired to Oxford, refusing to acknowledge the authority of Oliver Cromwell and also rejecting Cromwell's request to write an impartial history of the Civil Wars. Although deprived of his ministry, heavily fined and briefly imprisoned, his subsequent exile in Oxford afforded him time to research and write his most important work, *A Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm*. In it Casaubon launched a thinly veiled attack on the sectarianism and belief in personal divine inspiration which had dominated the Civil War and Interregnum periods, labelling it as 'nothing but Nature, and Superstition: that where the matter was disputable, and liable to error, it was safer to erre with authority, then through singularity'.<sup>523</sup>

Casaubon's father, Isaac, had been a celebrated classical scholar who had written against those who held magical beliefs by demonstrating how the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, held to be one of the most celebrated ancient writers on magic, had actually been written much later.<sup>524</sup> His love of learning has led to him being labeled one of the 'heroes of Renaissance classical scholarship'.<sup>525</sup> The fact that Meric attacked mystical theology with a humanistic critique of ancient sources should not surprise us, and reflects much of the influence of his father. More than this, he had a clear belief in the role of scholarship 'in the exposition and elucidation of Protestant Christianity and its defence against the ever-present threat from Rome'.<sup>526</sup> Casaubon involved himself in the same ongoing debates as Serenus Cressy over infallibility, started by Archbishop Laud and John Fisher, which we will return to in the next chapter of this study. Even in these works Casaubon mentioned mystical theology, explaining how 'there is indeed a new kind of Divinity, lately much cried up by some [...] which doth pretend to great perfection' but had

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77-120, p. 78.

<sup>521</sup> See Michael Heyd, 'Medical Discourse in Religious Controversy: The Case of the Critique of "Enthusiasm" on the Eve of the Enlightenment', *Science in Context*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1995), pp. 133-57.

<sup>522</sup> For a more detailed account of his life, see R. S. Spiller, "*Concerning Natural Experimental Philosophie*": Meric Casaubon and the Royal Society (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980).

<sup>523</sup> Meric Casaubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasme, as it is an effect of nature, but is mistaken by many for either divine inspiration, or diabolical possession* (London, 1655), sig. 7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>524</sup> Noel L. Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology: A Chapter in the Controversy over Occult Studies in Early Modern Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 222.

<sup>525</sup> T.A. Birrell, 'The reconstruction of the library of Isaac Casaubon' in *Hellinga Festschrift Feestbundel Mélanges* (Amsterdam: Nico Israel, 1980), pp. 59-68, p. 59.

<sup>526</sup> Michael Cyril William Hunter, *Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1995), p. 116.

‘more of delusion in it, then perfection’.<sup>527</sup> It is within these ongoing debates and struggles to defend the Church of England that Casaubon makes use of mystical theology.

Casaubon began the treatise by commenting on how his forced retirement had meant he could read books he had not had time for before, despite having them in his possession for a considerable period. One of them, printed in Paris in 1628, was *The life of Sister Katharine of Jesus*.<sup>528</sup> Despite being a ‘typical book of Catholic Counter-Reformation spirituality’, Casaubon did not state how he came across the work, simply remarking that he cannot remember how such a work came to be in his library.<sup>529</sup> After commenting that it contained a long dedication by Cardinal Bérulle and several approbations at the end by leading bishops, archbishops and doctors of divinity, Casaubon believed that if such a work was supported by so many of the Catholic faith it was worthy of his attention. Yet he found himself having to stop reading, such were his disagreements with what was written. His difficulty eventually forced him to conclude that the work was ‘a long contexture of severall strange raptures and enthusiasms, that had hapned unto a melancholick, or if you will, a devout Maid’.<sup>530</sup>

Casaubon purposely stressed that Sister Katharine was ‘melancholick’ rather than ‘devout’. Describing her as ‘devout’ in the Catholic mind, but essentially overtaken by madness when viewed by an Anglican, he highlighted the argument he would continue to build throughout the rest of the work. More of these superstitious figures could be found throughout the history of Catholicism and further proved it was built not on Scripture and reason, but on the corrupt authority of the Pope and religious delusion. To prove this Casaubon identified a threat that had been present throughout history. This threat was ‘*Enthusiasme*, or Divine Inspiration, very usual in all Ages: But mistaken, through ignorance

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<sup>527</sup> Meric Casaubon, *Of the necessity of reformation in, and before Luther's time and what (visibly) hath most hindred the progress of it : occasioned by some late virulent books written by Papists, but especially, by that intituled, Labyrinthus Cantuariensis : here besides some other points, the grand business of these times, infallibility, is fully discussed* (London, 1664), p. 102. Casaubon wrote this work in reply to Thomas Carwell's *Labyrinthus cantuariensis, or, Doctor Lawd's labyrinth beeing an answer to the late Archbishop of Canterburies relation of a conference between himselfe and Mr. Fisher, etc., wherein the true grounds of the Roman Catholique religion are asserted, the principall controversies betwixt Catholiques and Protestants thoroughly examined, and the Bishops Meandrick windings throughout his whole worke layd open to publique* (Paris, 1658).

<sup>528</sup> Madeleine de Saint-Joseph, *La vie de sœur Catherine de Jesus religieuse de l'ordre de Nostre-Dame du Mont-Carmel, établi en France selon la réformation de sainte Thérèse de Jésus* (Paris, 1628). Further details on the contents of this work can be found in Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 5. For the wider context of female piety in France see Jennifer Hillman, *Female Piety and the Catholic Reformation in France* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014).

<sup>529</sup> Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable*, p. 74.

<sup>530</sup> Casaubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasme* sig. ¶7. For the view that women were more susceptible to such melancholy see Katharine Hodgkin, ‘Scurvy Vapors and the Devil's Claw: Religion and the Body in Seventeenth-Century Women's Melancholy’, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2011), pp. 1-21.

of natural causes [...] as more frequent, so more dangerous'.<sup>531</sup> The source of such mistaken ignorance was identified through the writings of the ancients. These writers, among whom Plutarch was singled out as the most noticeable, all supported Casaubon's theory that before Socrates the natural temper of man was somewhat more enthusiastic. Man was characterized as being led by fantasy and superstition. As a result:

There was no talk among men, but of dreams, revelations, and apparitions: and they that could so easily phansy God in whatsoever they did phansy, had no reason to mistrust or to question the relations of others, though never so strange, which were so agreeable to their humors and dispositions; and by which themselves were confirmed in their own supposed Enthusiasms.<sup>532</sup>

Casaubon connected this pre-Christian history of enthusiasm with Catholicism in the third section of the treatise, entitled '*Of Contemplative and Philosophicall Enthusiasme*'. He presented mystical theology as a pre-Christian pagan source of enthusiasm that had infiltrated and gained influence within Catholicism. His reason for addressing mystical theology was twofold. The first was that Casaubon judged it a 'matter of great consequence, not only for the preservation of some lives, but of Truth, (more precious then many lives,) which hath in all Ages suffered by nothing more, then by pretended Enthusiasms; and of publick Peace, which hath often been disturbed by such, whether artifices, or mere mistakes'.<sup>533</sup> Mystical theology was a public danger, and those who believed they were the beneficiaries of visions from God were the ones who caused civil strife or controversy. One of the many examples given was of a woman named Martha who was brought to Paris in 1599 and was supposedly possessed. She made strange gestures, suffered from convulsions, spoke strange languages and could also endure pins and needles being thrust into her neck or arms without pain. Despite the efforts of the zealous monks and friars to perform an exorcism to rid the woman of her ills, nothing could be done. The issue threatened to divide the whole city, and was only resolved when the king and his council intervened and labelled the woman a counterfeit.<sup>534</sup>

The second reason was the threat of the Jesuits. According to Casaubon the use of mystical theology was chiefly the practice of the Jesuits and 'Jesuited' politicians, who influenced the lives of kings and princes by claiming divine inspiration through such a 'mysticall art'. Casaubon, with a hint of pity, explained how Jesuits were tormented by long

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<sup>531</sup> Casaubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasm*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59. Casaubon noted elsewhere that the population in general took an interest in the reports of these strange happenings, whether they were true or false, because it was naturally pleasing to the humour to know of such things (p. 68).

and forced sessions of contemplation and soon became ‘ecstaticall’.<sup>535</sup> This was a much wider threat to intellectual stability however, as Casaubon questioned why men of every era had been seduced by rapture and ecstasies while at the same time condemning others for it. The example he gave was of Tertullian, a noted author who wrote against heresy in the Christian faith, yet was a firm believer that one in his congregation had been granted the gift of divine revelation. As wise and learned men were deceived by their own flawed flesh and blood into believing enthusiasm, men of lesser learning and judgement imitated and continued such errors. Thus enthusiastic raptures and ecstatic experiences had been believed by ordinary people (especially women, according to Casaubon) throughout history, and persuaded people into madness because those of high learning and authority were also deceived.<sup>536</sup> Many of the cases that were presented as visionary or prophetic were eventually proven to be the product of deception. An example is given of a baker boy in Germany in 1581 who was believed to have been receiving great visions and sang songs and hymns he had no knowledge of beforehand. The story concluded with the doctor tending to the boy removing him from his home and placing him somewhere more suitable to be observed, only for his prophecies to vanish, and for all to conclude the boy was nothing more than an ‘arrant Rogue’. Similarly in 1560 in Freiburg a Lutheran divine named Paulus Eberus devoted time to disproving a local woman was a prophetess, concluding that her visions were nothing more than the product of a very mild form of epilepsy and a godly education.<sup>537</sup>

Mystical theology was viewed as the ultimate deception of them all, and perhaps the root cause of all of these other forms of enthusiasm. The biggest indignation to Casaubon was the fact that mystical theology plainly had origins in the Platonic tradition and therefore should not have been willingly accepted and respected in Christian religious belief. Mystical theology was condemned not only for its ability to limit man’s use of reason and rationality, but also for its heathenish, pagan origins.<sup>538</sup> No man could read Plato without ‘some passion tending to Enthusiasme’ and it had been the ‘infatuation of many, who being but weak

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid., p. 129-30. Casaubon’s father, Isaac, had been good friends with a Jesuit in France before leaving for England, even presenting James I with an *apologia* for the Jesuits written by Fronton du Duc, suggesting that this element of pity may stem from his father’s experience with such a group; W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 131. His pity would be soured by claims from the Jesuit J.C. Bulenger that his father had used a Jewish informant to gather his knowledge of Hebrew; Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, *“I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue”: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 68.

<sup>536</sup> Casaubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasm*, pp. 67, 76, 129.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-72.

<sup>538</sup> Michael Heyd, ‘Descartes- An Enthusiast Malgré Lui?’, in David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 35-58, p. 48.

aspired high'. Whatever benefits Christianity may have inherited from Platonic thought were presented as being completely outweighed by the numerous heresies it had created. These had been passed on through generations of contemplative men who had been eager to propagate 'the abortive fruits of such depraved phansies' onto others. Although Casaubon was cautious in his condemnation, arguing that Plato may have meant well, he was clear in his identification of Plato as the cause of Christians believing that they could exceed ordinary nature and move into some form of supernatural ecstasy.<sup>539</sup> No such caution was used when attacking Pseudo-Dionysius, the writer Casaubon believed had deceived all and smuggled enthusiasm into Christianity.

The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius represented a 'pretended antiquity' which had bewitched many and become a genuine source of authority in religious controversy. In writing against Pseudo-Dionysius's *De Theologia Mystica*, Casaubon sought to prove that man could not attain some form of angelic transformation, nor could he obtain 'such a degree of union with God, that he shall neither by the help of any sense, or phansie, understand as other men; but by a kind of *contactus*, or union of substance with the Supreme Cause of all things'. It was this 'marvellous transformation of man by philosophy' that needed to be shown to be false, and was attacked systematically by Casaubon. No such doctrine appeared in the Gospel, nor in the writings of the ancient Fathers of greatest antiquity, and it was not to be held above criticism. To such end he requested that the reader go and read over the work themselves and discover the falsities:

I would desire the Reader, that hath so much curiosity for the truth, to read over that Discourse (it is very short, and will take but little time:) of this pretended *Dionysius*, and tell himself, when he hath done, (some common things concerning the incomprehensibleness of God, laid aside,) whether the very pith and marrow of it, be not in those few lines.<sup>540</sup>

In showing the doctrines of Pseudo-Dionysius to be enthusiastic, Casaubon was making a refined point about their standing in the Catholic faith. Despite its origins mystical theology became a 'new Divinity' among Christians, especially among some 'illiterate monks' who argued that authority and knowledge did not require learning and a study of the Gospel. As the truths of mystical theology were beyond human rationality, God's special favour chose who should be gifted, literate or not.<sup>541</sup> He posited as his final question whether the writings of these heathen Philosophers should be taken above that of the Scriptures, received among all Christians as divine, and which instilled a sense of sobriety in all. His answer revealed

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<sup>539</sup> Casaubon, *A treatise concerning enthusiasme*, pp. 52-53. Casaubon chose the word 'Ecstasies' carefully, reminding the reader that it came from the Greek *ecstasis* meaning a distraction of the senses, a violent alienation of the mind, or a temporary madness (p. 62).

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116-18.



the very substance of his overall argument:

I am one, I confesse, that think reason should be highly valued by all creatures, that are naturally rationall. Neither do I think we need to seek the Image of God in man elsewhere, then in perfect Reason; such as he was created in. *Holinesse* and *Righteousnesse* were but fruits of it. Let others admire Witches and Magicians, as much as they will; who by their art can bring them their lost precious things, and Jewels: I honour and admire a good Physician much more, who can (as Gods instrument) by the knowledge of nature, bring a man to his right wits again, when he hath lost them: and I tremble (*homo sum, & humani à me nihil alienum puto*;) when I think that one Mad man is enough to infect a whole Province. Somewhat to that purpose we have had already: and I doubt, whether by this there would have been one sober man left in all *Spain*, had not the *Alumbrados*, or *Illuminated sect*, which also pretended much to Contemplation, and thereby to Ecstasies and mysticall unions, been suppressed in time.

For Casaubon the issue of enthusiasm could be traced back through a single historical narrative; the continuation of Platonism into Christianity. Its evolution into mystical theology had been used by countless groups throughout Christian history to inspire enthusiasm and deceive others into believing they were receiving divine visions, which were actually the product of natural causes such as melancholy. Worse still, such influences were also taken up by ‘the enthusiastick *Arabs*, the very same that bred us *Mahomet*’, showing it to be even more anti-Christian.<sup>542</sup> Those who had an ‘enthusiastick brain’, such as Sister Katharine, were simply reflecting what ‘happened unto other melancholick persons, in other places’.<sup>543</sup> Mystical theology had only encouraged this enthusiasm and the Catholic Church had taken such a theology to its heart, despite its heathen origins and the overt Platonic teachings of the counterfeit Pseudo-Dionysius. Indeed Casaubon noted that the authorities of this kind of theology were either ‘Heathen Philosophers’ who were the ‘greatest opposers of Christianitie’, including Plotinus and Proclus, or ‘very late and inconsiderable writers’, including Ruysbroeck, Harphius, Tauler and Teresa of Avila. There was ‘not one word out of any ancient Father’ either Greek or Latin to support it, and Casaubon separated the ‘ignorance and self-conceitednesse’ of these writers, from the ‘true Christian Raptures, proceeding from intent love and admiration’ found in Augustine of Hippo and Bernard of Clairvaux. He lamented that he could not have taken up a larger criticism of these writers due to the confines of the treatise and assured the reader he would have had much to say about ‘all that hath been written either by Dionysius (so called), or any other of that Sect’.<sup>544</sup>

For Casaubon the dangers of enthusiasm and mystical theology were clear. He was critical of the raptures and trances so readily believed in the Catholic Church, which to him were clearly the result of melancholy or deception. Claims to divine inspiration had caused

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

the multiplication of sects and heretics and polluted Christianity. Nothing was guiltier of this crime than mystical theology. Pseudo-Dionysius had deceived his readers into believing he was the Athenian convert of Paul the Apostle mentioned in Acts 17:34. In reality Casaubon exposed him as a much later author attempting to introduce Platonic thought back into Christian thinking. This had been the source of much enthusiasm, encouraging individuals to claim perfection through union with God. Enthusiasm and vanity had been the source of these claims, but yet many had believed them. Accordingly, criticism of mystical theology was something which Casaubon thought ‘too much cannot be said’.<sup>545</sup>

Casaubon’s condemnation influenced another Anglican defender of the Church decades later. John Wilson’s *The Scriptures genuine interpreter asserted* (1678) argued that the good Christian was one who submitted to Scripture as the rule of faith and life, believed revelation brought understanding of Scripture, rather than something outside of it, and regularly exercised their ‘rational Faculties’ in matters of faith by having a strong understanding of Scripture, should they ever be challenged.<sup>546</sup> Wilson defended the movements of the Holy Spirit within the individual which aided towards sanctification, but outright condemned those who went beyond the plain meaning of Scripture. Mystical theology only encouraged false raptures and visions and was an enthusiastic practice revived by sectarians and enthusiasts during the Interregnum which threatened the stability of the Church. True Christians disowned and rejected ‘the absurd Principles and arrogant Presumptions of the falsly-call’d Mystical Theology’ which had been practiced in ancient times and then revived. It attempted to justify ecstatic raptures and deifications of the soul by ‘an utter cessation of all Intellectual Operations’. But Wilson confidently referred the reader to Casaubon’s work as proof that mystical theology came from ‘heathen Philosophers’ and was a ‘Phantastick Theology’ that had been revived in a ‘New Method so much cried up of late’.<sup>547</sup> Casaubon’s argument that mystical theology was a Catholic and sectarian ‘anti-Christian’ enthusiasm had proved influential.

### **Mystical Theology: A Catholic Corruption**

Periods of anti-Catholicism during the Restoration encouraged both those within the Church of England and those who had been ejected from it via the various conformity acts enshrined

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>547</sup> John Wilson, *The Scriptures genuine interpreter asserted, or, A discourse concerning the right interpretation of Scripture wherein a late exercitation, intituled, Philosophia S. scripturae interpres, is examin’d, and the Protestant doctrine in that point vindicated : with some reflections on another discourse of L.W. written in answer to the said exercitation : to which is added, An appendix concerning internal illumination, and other operations of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man, justifying the doctrine of Protestants, and the practice of serious Christians, against the charge of enthusiasm, and other unjust criminations* (London, 1678), p. 66.

in the Clarendon Code to speak out against mystical theology. Those who had an interest in antiquity and the history of Christianity often engaged with the problem of its pre-Christian origins. This historical venture was influenced by the polemical angle of these works; from the time of Luther onwards Protestants had gone to great lengths to show that the Catholic religion was the worst manifestation of heathen religion. Idolatry, host worship, invocation of saints and veneration of Mary were all signs of the influence of heathen religion carried onwards into Christianity by Catholicism. This is what Peter Harrison has called ‘Pagano-papism’, an argument which originated with Luther that linked ‘papism’, ‘mahometanism’ and Judaism together as offshoots of pagan idolatry.<sup>548</sup> Because of the inherent anti-Catholic nature of this venture, many authors both within the Church of England and outside it had much to say on the origins of mystical theology.

One of the most substantial engagements with mystical theology in this sense was the non-conformist Theophilus Gale’s *The Court of the Gentiles* (1670). From the very beginning of the work Gale made the case for mystical theology being a ‘corrupt *complexum* of *Orphaick, Pythagorick, and Judaick Infusions*’. Moreover, it was a theology developed out of Pythagorean and Platonic thought by Origin and his successors, the Egyptian monks. Mystical theology was thus the main culprit of a ‘bodie of *Antichristianisme*’ which was formed from earlier pre-Christian traditions. According to Gale, ‘an Egge is scarcely more like an Egge, than those *Mystick contemplations* coined by *Origen* [...] are like *Pythagorean, and Platonick Infusions*’.<sup>549</sup> With this Gale attacked Catholic monasticism. The ‘*Monkish Divines* [with] *their Mystick Theologie*’ were the carriers of this anti-Christian doctrine into Christianity and their entire monastic life and discipline were nothing more than a corrupt idea borrowed from Pythagoras. According to Gale the monks were the successors of both the ‘Pythagoreans’ and the Jewish sect called the Essenes, all of whom rejected honours, riches and worldly pleasures. All of their pretended sanctity, especially that of the ‘pretended Popish mortifications’, fell short of that of the first Christians.<sup>550</sup> He was not content to merely show that mystical theology had links to pagan philosophy however, and connected the Catholic practices of canon law, the cult of the saints, hymns, fêtes, images, relics, and the mass with the heathen pre-Christian world. All these errors had

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<sup>548</sup> Harrison, ‘*Religion*’ and *the Religions*, pp. 135-44. One of the greatest examples is Samuel Parker’s insistence that Plato was the source of all popery and enthusiasm in his *A free and impartial censure of the Platonick philosophie being a letter written to his much honoured friend Mr. N.B* (Oxford, 1666).

<sup>549</sup> Theophilus Gale, *The court of the gentiles, or, A discourse touching the original of human literature, both philologie and philosophie, from the Scriptures and Jewish church. in order to a demonstration of 1. The perfection of Gods word and church light, 2. The imperfection of natures light and mischief of vain philosophie, 3. The right use of human learning and especially sound philosophie* (Oxford, 1670), sigs. a4<sup>r</sup>- b1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

entered the Church and had festered there unchecked before the Reformation.<sup>551</sup>

Gale was not the only writer to attack monasticism in this way, with many writers focusing on Pseudo-Dionysius. The identification of monasticism as the product of the fraudulent Pseudo-Dionysius's teachings on mystical theology was elaborated on in Robert Ferguson's *The Interest of Reason in Religion* (1675). In the early years of the Restoration Ferguson had been active in the London underground of Protestant dissenters, later becoming an informer to the secretary of state, Sir Joseph Williamson, giving him advance warning of planned insurrections led by Presbyterians and Independents.<sup>552</sup> In his work he asserted that there was one sense of Scripture, the literal or historical. To argue for the 'plurality of coordinate or Ambiguous senses' was the height of madness, invented only to weaken the authority of the established Church.<sup>553</sup> One of the earliest to suggest there were 'Mystical and Cabalistical Senses' to the plainest parts of Scripture was Origen, who was afterwards imitated by 'Popish Fryers'.<sup>554</sup> This was then taken up by the Catholic Church as means of setting themselves up as the infallible judge of all things scriptural:

Nor is there any one *Topick* which the *Papists* to justify the with-holding the Laity from the reading of the Bible, and to serve the design of erecting a living Infallible Judg, manage with more confidence in opposition to the perspicuity of the Scripture, than that there are many Tropes, Figures and Rhetorical Schem's in the stile of it.<sup>555</sup>

Mystical theology was similar, being a mixture of the writings of Platonic, Aristotelian and Arabic 'Contemplative Heathens'. Taking from Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius was 'dipt in that Mad and Frantick Notion' of believing of an intimate union with God whereby man became deified. After this it 'spread among the Romish Monasticks [...] called Mystick Theologues', only for Familists to borrow from these Catholic sources in their language of being 'Godded with God' and 'Christed with Christ'. After this other wild enthusiasts such as the 'non-sense and high-flown Cantings of the Quakers' carried on this tradition.<sup>556</sup> Mystical theology was the source material for Protestant sectarianism as well, and deserved fierce criticism. Not only was Catholicism an external threat, but its mystical theology was generating internal threats to the established Church as well.

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<sup>551</sup> Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions*, p. 144.

<sup>552</sup> Melinda Zook, 'Ferguson, Robert (d. 1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9325>, accessed 15 Aug 2013]

<sup>553</sup> Robert Ferguson, *The interest of reason in religion with the import & use of scripture-metaphors, and the nature of the union betwixt Christ & believers (with reflections on several late writings, especially Mr. Sherlocks Discourse concerning the knowledg of Jesus Christ, &c.) modestly enquired into and stated* (London, 1675), p. 137.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 525-26.

A voice from within the Church of England echoed similar criticisms. William Cave's account of the lives of ancient writers was similarly critical of Pseudo-Dionysius. He noted that although not much was known about Pseudo-Dionysius, it was known that he was well versed in the 'secret and mystical Philosophy' of Plato.<sup>557</sup> Echoing Gale, Cave argued that 'one egg is not more like another, then this mans Divinity is like the Theology of that School'.<sup>558</sup> Rather than using 'Scripture-proofs' he relied on human argument and ways of reasoning, a key tenant of pagan religion, and began to innovate against established Christian teachings as well as setting up a sect in his own name. He thus laid the foundation for a 'mystical and unintelligible Divinity among Christians' whereby certain men believed they had achieved a Christian state of perfection. After quoting directly from the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, he concluded that mystical theology was 'a strange Jargon of non sense, and contradiction'. The only results one could gain from abandoning reason and believing they could understanding the mysteries of Christianity was to become an enthusiast.<sup>559</sup>

The same year saw an additional attack on the origins of mystical theology published by another ejected minister. Jonathan Hanmer's *Archaioskopia* (1677) chose to focus on the character of Pseudo-Dionysius once more. In an attack on the very principles of the Catholic religion, Hanmer questioned the reliability of both Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius. He outlined the fact there were questions over the authenticity of the works of both of these authors, but commented that regardless of this they are 'cited by those of *Rome* as *Origens*, to prove the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, that *Dionysius* the *Areopagite* is the Authour of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and what is the use and benefit of making the sign of the Cross with the fingers'.<sup>560</sup> He remarked that Pseudo-Dionysius had very few mentions in the works of the more established early Fathers of the Church, and sought to prove that Pseudo-Dionysius must have been present in the seventh century, as some of what he wrote about would have been impossible for him to know if he had lived earlier.

'Pagano-papism' was thus a popular argument in the writings of those both within and outside the Church of England. Pseudo-Dionysius proved particularly popular as an example of the 'anti-Christian' doctrines which had deceitfully entered Christianity.

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<sup>557</sup> William Cave, *Apostolici, or, The history of the lives, acts, death, and martyrdoms of those who were contemporary with, or immediately succeeded the apostles* (London, 1677), p. 67.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-76.

<sup>560</sup> Jonathan Hanmer, *Archaioskopia, or, A view of antiquity presented in a short but sufficient account of some of the fathers, men famous in their generations who lived within, or near the first three hundred years after Christ: serving as a light to the studious, that they may peruse with better judgment and improve to greater advantage the venerable monuments of those eminent worthies* (London, 1677), p. 221.

Although the practice of attempting to show Catholicism was ‘heathen’ stretched back to Luther and the early Reformation, we should be conscious of the contemporary events galvanizing such attacks on mystical theology and Catholicism as well. Tensions ran high in England across the early 1670s in regards to suspicions of the Catholicism of Charles II and James, Duke of York. A treaty with Catholic France to help fund another war with the Dutch in 1672, alongside the publication of a Declaration of Indulgence which suspended all penal laws and allowed Catholics to worship in their own homes, stirred anti-Catholicism further. The confirmation that James was indeed a Catholic, alongside French expansionism into the Low Countries, meant that penal laws were enforced by Parliament more than at any time since the Restoration. In the face of a powerful Catholic foe, the divisions within the Protestant ranks temporarily closed.<sup>561</sup> James’s marriage to Mary of Modena ensured that anti-Catholicism dominated Parliamentary debates, including the French alliance, limitations on the power of future Catholic monarchs and test acts to stop the perceived threat of spreading popery. The fictitious Popish Plot in 1678 conjured up rumours of French and Spanish landings, Catholic armies rising up, and bombs being placed in churches.<sup>562</sup> It was in the face of these ongoing threats that anti-Catholicism fueled the efforts to trace ‘Pagano-papism’ and inspired resolute criticism of the Catholic faith.

### **Henry Dodwell and Church Separation**

The final argument against mystical theology can be found in the work of Henry Dodwell. One of the most strident defenders of the Restoration Church, Dodwell was unafraid to challenge both Catholic and non-conformist opponents. In the 1680s he was part of a group of patristic scholars at Oxford that included John Fell, dean of Christ Church and bishop of Oxford, John Pearson, bishop of Chester, and Edward Bernard. Dodwell would join them in their quest to prove the relationship between primitive Christianity and episcopacy.<sup>563</sup> The work that this chapter is concerned with, published in 1679, was entitled *Separation of churches from episcopal government* and featured Dodwell reusing arguments we have previously seen in writers such as Casaubon to attack mystical theology.

Dodwell began the work with a cautious passage concerning the exact nature of his endeavour. He went to great pains to stress that his work did not concern schisms between Churches, but rather the relationship between a Church and one of its members who

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<sup>561</sup> For Catholicism as a unifying ‘other’ see Lake, ‘Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice’, pp. 190-1.

<sup>562</sup> Coward, *The Stuart Age*, ch. 10; John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660- 1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), ch. 6.

<sup>563</sup> Theodor Harmsen, ‘Dodwell, Henry (1641–1711)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7763>, accessed 10 July 2014]

separated from it. His aim was to show that those who separate from their own Church were ‘*Schismatics*’, but avoided discussion of Churches separating from other Churches. Pre-empting his Catholic opponents, he insisted that if he could prove non-conformists to be ‘*Schismatics*’ it did not follow that the Church of England must be ‘*schismatical*’ for refusing communion with the Church of Rome. As far as Dodwell was concerned, separating Churches did not leave a subject destitute of a means to salvation, but if a subject left their Church, then salvation was threatened.<sup>564</sup> One of the major reasons people chose to leave the outward form of the Church and the salvation it offered was, according to Dodwell, mystical theology.

His major discussion of this theme occurs in Chapter XII, entitled ‘The very Case of abstaining from the Ordinances on pretence to *Perfection*’. The concept of schism had begun with those Platonic philosophers who believed that in preferring interior rather than exterior worship of God, they could strive to be like God, imitating him in their own lives and ‘expressing his Perfections’.<sup>565</sup> It was this belief that threatened the external worship of public assemblies. These men believed their hearts to be the true altars, their souls the true image of God, and their representations of God more pleasing than any material image could be. Dodwell explained:

That they who had arrived to this *Perfection* as to converse immediately with the Deity himself, were so far from being *advantaged*, as that they were rather *prejudiced* by their external Solemnities of his worship; that they rather debased their thoughts of him, and made them less worthy of him than they would have been in their own way of dealing with him.<sup>566</sup>

The early Christian Church inherited this from the ‘Hellenistical Jews’ and other groups that had promoted the belief, and it was even taken up by the Apostles who believed themselves to be ‘chosen Kings and Priests unto God’. This pre-Christian philosophy had therefore caused much damage in its application, and encouraged many different groups to believe themselves to be the receivers of a special kind of spiritual perfection.

Such a philosophy had informed the establishment of the earliest ‘Primitive Monks’. This was the ‘Popish *Mystical Divinity*, which is no other than an improvement of the *Pseudo-Areopagites* Doctrine, as that it self is no other than an application of the *Philosophy* I am speaking of to the Practice of *Christianity*’.<sup>567</sup> According to Dodwell, the

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<sup>564</sup>Henry Dodwell, *Separation of churches from episcopal government, as practised by the present non-conformists, proved schismatical from such principles as are least controverted and do withal most popularly explain the sinfulness and mischief of schism* (London, 1679), pp. iv-vii.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

proponents of mystical theology had taught that a person achieving perfection could eventually ascend beyond needing the sacraments, similar to Dodwell's contemporary 'Modern *Euthusiasts* and *Superordinancers*'. No doubt referring to the radical uses of mystical theology already discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Dodwell argued that:

It is indeed somewhat surprizing to observe, but he, who shall be pleased to observe, will find it true, that the Enthusiastick style of *Jacob Behmen*, *Henry Nicholas*, and the *Quakers*, and such other Enemies of *Learning*, such strangers to *Antiquity*, and to the tongues they wrote in, should so agree with the *Platonism* of the *elective Philosophy* I am speaking of.<sup>568</sup>

Despite being 'Enemies of Learning' who 'feigned themselves to be more unlearned than they were', Dodwell believed that the leaders of these sects must have had some knowledge of mystical theology, or indeed 'have light on some neglected Translations of some little things of that kind, which might have given them those little hints which might have been sufficient for a warm brain to work upon'.<sup>569</sup> As Nicholas McDowell has shown, many leaders of these radical groups did indeed possess a high level of education and scholarly skill and spread their ideas not through illegal preaching, but rather illegal writing.<sup>570</sup> Regardless of this, Dodwell commented that he found it surprising that those who had access to such texts did not discover the same mistakes as him.

Dodwell attacked groups who believed they were continuing the work of the Apostles and therefore did not need the modern Church. Dodwell insisted that the original Apostles had also been 'Governours of the Church' and with the help of the Holy Spirit had foreseen all problems that were to come and provided for them in the general constitutions of the Church. In that case, if the Church formed by the early Apostles was divinely inspired, then 'if the Apostles did not then think it fit to make any allowances for such Persons pretending *Perfection*, the reason must have been, because it was really unfit that any allowances should have been made for such Pretenders'.<sup>571</sup> The Apostles had enjoyed divine inspiration and had the foresight to provide an outward Church system that was as perfect as possible. If they had not provided for inner perfection, it must have been considered a false doctrine. As contemporary enthusiasts and sectarians were not following the work of the Apostles in claiming perfection, they were guilty of schism.

If mystical theology had any redeeming features, it was to be found in the fact that it converted many to Christianity. As many at the time had erroneously believed in this

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>570</sup> Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 29.

<sup>571</sup> Dodwell, *Separation of churches from episcopal government*, p. 256.



doctrine of inner perfection, Dodwell argued that some of the first preachers of Christianity had urged this ‘*Spiritual design of Religion, even to a neglect of its external ritual observances*’ as it was ‘very considerable that these very Principles seem to have had a principal influence on their conversion’.<sup>572</sup> Yet elsewhere he argued that while ‘mystical philosophy’ had been of ‘great use *then* for bringing many over to Christianity’ it was only considered true due to not being corrected by express revelation.<sup>573</sup> Anyone claiming divine inspiration and inner perfection was doing nothing less than falling into a trap that had been present from the very inception of Christianity, and was thus practicing a Pagan or Jewish philosophy, not a Christian one. Although given a less visible role in Dodwell’s account, this would also include anyone in the Catholic Church that sought to align themselves with ‘mystical divinity’, which had the same origins. Dodwell appealed to non-conformists and those who refused the outward practices of the Church in favour of personal spiritual perfection to consider their actions. For if they were proven wrong, then their actions would threaten their own salvation and invoke the judgement of God not only onto themselves, but on all others that had been seduced by them.<sup>574</sup> The outward Church was a much safer and divinely given form of worship more suitable than any pretended inner perfection inspired by the falsities of mystical theology. Dodwell’s plea for reunion came during the wave of anti-Catholicism after the Popish Plot. Fears that the army raised to aid the Dutch in the Franco-Dutch War would be turned against Parliament, and the impeachment of the Earl of Danby for secretly negotiating with Louis XIV, proved that England needed to be united against foreign threats. Dodwell’s attack on mystical theology was clearly an attempt to weaken the confidence of those who sought salvation outside the Church, and who were seen as a threat to social and political stability.

### **Mystical Theology among the Cambridge Platonists**

To counterbalance the negative approach to mystical theology which featured among critics of sectarianism and Catholicism, we need to turn finally to its reception among those often described as the Cambridge Platonists.<sup>575</sup> The group were heavily influenced by that great

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<sup>572</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., p. 336. Dodwell mentions this in a lengthy discussion on the need for the sacrament of Baptism.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., pp. 471-72.

<sup>575</sup> The canon of writers in this group is fluid and has changed over the years. Charles Taliaferro and Alison J. Teply list Ralph Cudworth, Benjamin Whichcote, Nathaniel Culverwell, John Smith, Henry More, Peter Sterry and Anne Conway in their (eds.), *Cambridge Platonist Spirituality* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004). Different selections for anthologies have been made by G. R. Cragg (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); C.A. Patrides (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). For commentary on the concept of ‘Cambridge Platonists’ and their main theological characteristics, see Sarah Hutton, ‘The Cambridge Platonists’, in Steven Nadler (ed.), *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell

humanist writer of the Italian Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino, who had created a synthesis of Christianity and the teachings of Plotinus. Subsequent reverence for Plato can be found in the humanist activities of Erasmus, John Fisher, Thomas More, Edward Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, all of whom served as precursors to the Cambridge movement.<sup>576</sup> Most of the group fell under the larger banner of ‘latitudinarians’, a label for those who sought the middle ground between Puritans and Catholics on one hand, and scepticism and materialism on the other. Cambridge in the Interregnum had served as a hub for Platonic teaching, where many believed that by tracing ancient wisdom or ‘perennial philosophy’ they could use ancient learning to bolster a ‘fresh armoury of philosophical arguments’.<sup>577</sup> Sarah Hutton has recently argued for a re-evaluation which moves away from presenting the Cambridge Platonists as a conservative group out of touch with the realities of their time who shared homogeneous doctrines and influences. What Hutton instead presents is a group well connected in England and on the Continent, whose works sold widely in both English and Latin, and whom held deeply unorthodox doctrines on a variety of issues such as the Trinity, pre-existence of the soul and universal salvation. Origen, one of the Fathers so widely attacked as heterodox, was central to their theology.<sup>578</sup> With this in mind, the attitudes of Peter Sterry, Henry More, Anne Conway, John Worthington and John Norris towards mystical theology suggest something of this willingness to engage with works condemned by many, such as those of Jacob Boehme, Augustine Baker and Teresa of Avila. Despite the rhetoric of enthusiasm aimed at the concept of mystical theology explored above, many among the Cambridge Platonists still found mystical works of interest.

Peter Sterry was an Independent theologian, Parliamentarian chaplain, and member of the Westminster Assembly. After the Restoration he withdrew from political life and became the private chaplain of Viscount Lisle at West Sheen, where he formed a devotional

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Publishers, 2002), pp. 308-19 as well as her comments in ‘Iconisms, Enthusiasm and Origen: Henry More Reads the Bible’, in Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (eds.), *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 192- 207, p. 192.

<sup>576</sup> Tod E. Jones (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists: A Brief Introduction* (Landham: University Press of America, 2005), p. 4. See also Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, trans. James P. Pettegrove (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1953); G. A. Panichas, ‘The Greek Spirit and the Mysticism of Henry More’, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 2 (1956), pp. 41-61.

<sup>577</sup> Joseph M. Levine, ‘Latitudinarians, neoplatonists, and the ancient wisdom’, in Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England 1640- 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 85-108, pp. 85-6. For more on ancient wisdom, see D.P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1972); Joseph M. Levine, ‘Deists and Anglicans: the ancient wisdom and the idea of progress’, in Roger D. Lund (ed.), *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing and Cultural Response, 1660-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 219-39.

<sup>578</sup> Sarah Hutton, ‘A Radical Review of the Cambridge Platonists’, in Hessayon and Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of Seventeenth-and-Early Eighteenth-Century Radicalism in Context*, pp. 161-82.

meeting group known as the ‘lovely Society’.<sup>579</sup> Numerous cases have been made for the ‘mysticism’ of his writings. Vivian de Sola Pinto hinted at this as early as 1934, when he observed that Sterry’s works recalled ‘the expressions and the experiences of the medieval and Catholic mystics and their predecessors, the Neoplatonists’, while his letters suggested he ‘practised the tradition exercises of mystical religion’.<sup>580</sup> Since then the case has been restated in different ways by D.P. Walker, Alison J. Teply and Dewey D. Wallace Jr.<sup>581</sup> While Teply’s account argues that Sterry’s contemplative devotion ‘appears to accord with the basic stages of the mystic’s ladder of ascent’, we should note that Sterry distanced himself from what was understood as mystical theology at the time.<sup>582</sup>

Sterry certainly promoted a personal relationship between the believer and Christ. He often spoke of the ‘foundation of the Lord’ within the individual, which could result in a ‘mystical, and peculiar union in the Spirit’ from which grace flowed.<sup>583</sup> Once the dross of corruption had been separated from the ‘Silver of Grace’, each individual saint would become a ‘pure Silver Vessel for God the finer to set on his table, and fil with the Treasure of his Divinity’.<sup>584</sup> Yet Sterry seemed sceptical of mystical theology itself. In a sermon preached before Whitehall in 1652, he outlined the similarities and differences between Catholics and Presbyterians. Their similarities included promoting a visible judge on matters of Scripture, condemning anyone who claimed to be moved by the spirit of God, promotion of outward rites, and concerns over civil power. He attacked Catholicism in particular for its superstitious rites which were best seen in the ‘generous contemplations, in mystical divinity’. Although they wanted the ‘*bread of heaven*, that *new wine* of the Kingdom, the *beauties* and *sweetnesses* of God in the *Spirit*’, all of which were beneficial to the inner man, Catholics entertained fancy and the senses using objects and images. Under the pretence of devotion, mystical divinity had revived the ‘*ghost of Judaisme*’ and outward pomp, including pleasure of pictures and music. Presbyterians condemned any act of the spirit,

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<sup>579</sup> N. I. Matar, ‘Peter Sterry and the “Lovely Society” of West Sheen’, *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1982), pp. 45-46.

<sup>580</sup> Vivian de Sola Pinto, *Peter Sterry: Platonist and Puritan, 1613–1672* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 114.

<sup>581</sup> D.P. Walker, ‘Eternity and the Afterlife’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 27 (1964), pp. 214-50; idem., *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), ch. 7; Alison Teply, ‘The Mystical Theology of Peter Sterry: A Study in Neoplatonist Puritanism’ (PhD Thesis: University of Cambridge, 2004); Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 2. For the influence of Gregory of Nyssa on Sterry, see N.I. Matar, ‘Mysticism and Sectarianism in Mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century England’, *Studia Mystica*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1988), pp. 55-65.

<sup>582</sup> Teply, ‘The Mystical Theology of Peter Sterry’, p. 157.

<sup>583</sup> Peter Sterry, *The way of God with his people in these nations opened in a thanksgiving sermon, preached on the 5th of November, 1656, before the Right Honorable the High Court of Parliament* (London, 1657), p. 30.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

referring to any '*kisses between God and the Soul*' as whimsical enthusiasm, but Catholics went too far in the opposite direction. According to Sterry the '*sensualities of the Papacy*' were not to be defended, and this included those who pretended to '*Spiritual inlightnings, Spirituall warmings*' which were only a '*vail upon the Spirit*'.<sup>585</sup>

This ambiguity towards mystical theology is best seen in Sterry's attitude towards the writings of Jacob Boehme. In his study of the links between the two, Nabil Matar constructs an image of Sterry as a man of 'mystical leaning' who found Boehme inspiring to the point of admiring his devotion, but nevertheless dismissed elements of his writings as mixed with 'Heathenish Philosophy' which had lead many into a 'maze of darkness'.<sup>586</sup> As Sterry was a leading Independent divine under Cromwell, and was concerned with the spread of unorthodox books in England, it was natural that he was hesitant to approve of anything that might further spread heterodox beliefs. Although Sterry believed those within the Catholic Church were right to seek the sweetness of God, he believed they were too buried under the iconoclasm and image worship of that Church to achieve such a goal. We should note that these comments were made while Sterry held a public office of influence and importance, and it is entirely likely that after the Restoration and his withdrawal to West Sheen he could wholeheartedly embrace more of these works. This begrudging admittance that some elements of the spirituality of Catholic authors could be beneficial if stripped of everything considered 'Popish', however, is a recurring theme among the Cambridge Platonists.

This conflict of interests has also been highlighted by Hutton to have taken place within Henry More. She notes that More's most famous work, *Enthusiasmus triumphatus*, should be seen as a 'struggle to set a boundary between notions espoused by and ascribed to other unorthodox thinkers and his own beliefs'. His conflict with alchemist Thomas Vaughan, of which *Enthusiasmus* was centre stage, was an example of where 'the common ground between the protagonists seems greater than their distance'.<sup>587</sup> Given that More's tutor at Christ's College was Robert Gell, known for his perfectionist beliefs in the same strain as Sebastian Castellio, we should not be surprised that despite the prevalent attitude towards mystical theology as enthusiasm, More harboured a more positive attitude.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> Peter Sterry, *England's deliverance from the northern presbytery, compared with its deliverance from the Roman papacy by Peter Sterry, once fellow of Emmanuel Colledge in Cambridge, now preacher to the Right Honorable the Councill of State, sitting at White-Hall* (Leith, 1652), pp. 15-20.

<sup>586</sup> N.I. Matar, 'Peter Sterry and Jacob Boehme', *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1986), pp. 33-36.

<sup>587</sup> Hutton, 'A Radical Review of the Cambridge Platonists', p. 173. For more on this controversy see Frederic B. Burnham, 'The More-Vaughan Controversy: The Revolt Against Philosophical Enthusiasm', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1974), pp. 33-49.

<sup>588</sup> Robert Crocker, 'Mysticism and Enthusiasm in Henry More', in Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614-1687) Tercentenary Studies* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), pp. 137-55, p. 140. For more on

More's earliest publication *Psychodia Platonica* (1642) emerged from studying the 'Purging of the Mind' as detailed in 'Platonick Writers' such as Marsilio Ficino and Plotinus, as well the 'Mystical Divines' who spoke of the purification of the Soul and the purgative life which lead to illumination. No other work inspired More more than the *Theologia Germanica*, despite being tinged with a 'certain deep Melancholy' and having 'no slight Errors in Matters of Philosophy'. Its core principle of extinguishing the Will and being 'thus Dead to our selves' in God appealed to More's reason and conscience, so much so that it 'struck and ronz'd' his soul. The annihilation of the self was the only way that 'the New Birth, may revive and grow up in us'.<sup>589</sup> In *Enthusiasmus* More complimented the *Theologia Germanica* as having more 'true and savory Divinity' than thousands of other works, but at the same time denounced the enthusiasm of the 'contemplation of things' which made people believe God had a 'more then ordinary affection towards them' and an 'intimate and real union with him'. This was a form of melancholy, where 'every fine thought or fancy' that entered the mind was taken as 'a singular illumination from God'. This stuffing of heads and writing with 'every flaring fancy that Melancholy suggests' was to be found in 'Chymists and several Theosophists' as well, all of whom were counterfeit enthusiasts. Given this attitude, it is surprising that More was often flattering about the writings of Jacob Boehme in later works, defending him as a 'pardonable enthusiast'.<sup>590</sup> His attitude towards the *Theologia Germanica* and Boehme suggests a more complex relationship with mystical theology which needs unravelling.

More reveals his attitude towards mystical theology in one of his many letters to Anne Conway.<sup>591</sup> It appears that he disapproved of the concept of deification presented in many mystical works, and his discussion of it was prompted by Conway sending him a Latin edition of the *The narrow path of divine truth* by Matthew Weyer, later published in English in 1683.<sup>592</sup> More noted that Weyer's work had many 'symptoms of an excellent Cristian Spiritt' and that he approved of the concept of developing the inward man by the

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More's attitude towards enthusiasm see David W. Dockrill, 'Spiritual Knowledge and the Problem of Enthusiasm in Seventeenth Century England', in David W. Dockrill and R.G. Tanner (eds.), *The Concept of Spirit* (Auckland: University of Auckland, 1985); Daniel C. Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Henry More; Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Robert Crocker, *Henry More, 1614-1687: A Biography of the Cambridge Platonist* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), ch. 4.

<sup>589</sup> Richard Ward, *The Life of The Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More, Late Fellow of Christ's College in Cambridge. To which are annex'd Divers of his Useful and Excellent Letters* (London, 1710), pp. 12-13.

<sup>590</sup> Sarah Hutton, 'Henry More and Jacob Boehme', in idem., (ed.), *Henry More (1614-87)*, pp. 157-71, p. 159.

<sup>591</sup> For more on Conway see Sarah Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>592</sup> Matthew Weyer, *The narrow path of divine truth described from living practice and experience of its three great steps* (London, 1683).

mortification of the will to become ‘wholly resigned to God’. Yet More believed ultimately that Weyer suffered from an ‘over heated high soring melancholy Temper and the over much value[ing] of Theologia Germanica’. More argued that the perfect extinguishing of all images, ideas, reason and understanding to the point of ‘killing the very soul itself’ which resulted in an ‘essential union with God’ was nothing more than a ‘secret Luciferian working of Melancholy’. He elaborated to explain:

I say neither Imagination nor Reason nor understanding are to be mortified or extinguished but onely self exultation in them, much higher an unselfinterested love or Benignity of Spiritt, which is the greatest Deification that I know in Angels or men whether in this life or that to come. but that these sensible and intelligible Ideas and perceptions should be mortifyde under pretense of an Essentiall union with God, as if the Divine body in the new birth was not sufficient, which has its increase and growth, in nothing but the urgent suggestions of a dry and hard overbearing Melancholy.<sup>593</sup>

More’s concept of the deification of man separated him from what he saw in mystical theology. His belief was that the soul’s ‘deiformity’ had been obscured by its bodily incarceration. The soul’s lowest part consisted of materiality and sensual gratification, the middle contained the will and reason, and the highest contained the ‘seed’ or image of God, where divine truths could be perceived. The will and reason could be directed upwards towards the divine, becoming more refined in the ‘aetherial matter’ contained there, after which the soul would relinquish its attachment to the pleasures of materiality and regain its original deiformity.<sup>594</sup> This would give rise to a psycho-physiological state in which the mind and senses could more readily enjoy divine sensations and communications.<sup>595</sup> To go beyond this self-denial and claim that the will and reason needed to be completely extinguished to result in a union with God was where More separated himself from mystical theology. Despite his apparently negative criticism of the *Theologia Germanica* here, elsewhere he encouraged Conway to read the ‘little German companion’, and Conway even suggested her husband read it, despite its difficult concepts.<sup>596</sup> More was happy to appropriate elements of mystical theology where it suited, but rejected the end goal of direct union with God as true ‘deification’. Like Casaubon, More believed that vivid dreams and visions could be induced by natural causes such as unbalanced passions, leading to a disruption in the use of reason whereby the soul became prisoner to such illusions.<sup>597</sup> It was

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<sup>593</sup> Sarah Hutton (ed.), *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends, 1642-1684* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 526.

<sup>594</sup> Crocker, *Henry More, 1614-1687: A Biography of the Cambridge Platonist*, p. 19.

<sup>595</sup> Crocker, ‘Mysticism and Enthusiasm’, p. 139.

<sup>596</sup> Hutton (ed.), *The Conway Letters*, p. 280.

<sup>597</sup> R.J. Scott, ‘Visions, Dreams, and the Discernment of Prophetic Passions: Sense and Reason in the Writings of the Cambridge Platonists and John Beale, 1640-60’, in Copeland and Machielsen (eds.), *Angels of Light?*, pp. 201-33, pp. 216-17.

in these illusions that those who practiced mystical theology and believed they could achieve union with God were trapped.

Others associated with the Cambridge Platonists had a more relaxed attitude to works of mystical theology. Despite attempts to distinguish between the ‘mysticism’ of the Cambridge Platonists and the ‘emotional language’ of the Catholic tradition, the emphasis on rationality among the Cambridge group did not mean they were inoculated from the influence of Catholic writings.<sup>598</sup> More had sent John Worthington a copy of Serenus Cressy’s *Exomologesis* and had in turn received a copy of the life of Teresa of Avila. More softly jibed Worthington for being too fond of the image of Augustine Baker printed at the front of his *Sancta Sophia*. Worthington admitted that he liked the illustration of Baker deep in thought, and that he was open to reading all works of mystical theology. Once the ‘stubble and wood and hay’ of the writings had been removed, he claimed to enjoy the works of Thomas à Kempis, Tauler, Boehme and Baker. They could only have been made better by being freed from ‘the Popish entanglements, or the fooleries of enthusiasm’. Baker wrote in a way that few Protestants could better, according to Worthington, and had written of experimental truths that ‘those who are most inwardly and seriously religious do agree in and heartily relish’. Again the best parts of mystical theology were the elements of mortification and self-abnegation. Worthington admitted he ‘could not but love good savoury truths, when they are earnestly commended to us wheresoever I see them’. Baker’s divinity had parallels in the philosophy of Plotinus of ‘things not to be seen, felt, or understood’. If one removed Baker’s ‘mystical notions’ about contemplation and the trappings of Catholicism present in his arguments, then what was left was a ‘good and honest heart, and a practical Christian’.<sup>599</sup> Others associated with the Cambridge Platonists would not be as reserved. John Norris, in the introduction to his letters to and from Mary Astell, condemned the ‘dry Study and Speculation of Scholastick Heads’ and instead advanced the ‘Fire of our Hearts’ as the shortest way to perfection. Through love one could raise themselves up to ‘contemplate the Face of God’ in part, for even those who counted as ‘pured and illuminated Spirits’ could not make their experiences of the incomprehensible intelligible to others. For those claiming that he and Astell had taken the concept of the love of God too far, he advised them that such a love was commonplace in books of piety and

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<sup>598</sup> Paul M. Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), p. 154; C.A. Patrides (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 17.

<sup>599</sup> Richard Copley Christie (ed.), *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, Vice Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Etc. Etc. From the Baker Mss. in the British Museum and the Cambridge University Library and Other Sources. Vol. II. - Part II.* (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1886), pp. 321-23.

devotion, especially those ‘written after the mystical and spiritual Way’, including Teresa of Avila, Bonaventure and Thomas à Kempis.<sup>600</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Even Peter Sterry and Henry More were hesitant to approve of mystical theology, despite their personal interests in the spirituality of such authors and their enthusiasm for Platonic thought. For Sterry it smacked of papal idolatry and image worship, for More it contained a misunderstanding that deification meant becoming perfect in direct union with God. These proved to be tame criticisms in light of the rhetoric we have explored earlier in this chapter. Meric Casaubon and Henry Dodwell both made use of mystical theology to attack sectarians and Catholics alike, building on Robert Burton’s earlier transformation of enthusiasm and melancholy in a polemical tool to defend the Church of England. In a time of fierce anti-Catholicism and strident defences of episcopalianism, mystical theology proved a useful tool through which to criticize all those outside of the established Church. It was a weapon with which to attack the ‘anti-Christian’ teachings adopted by the heathenish Roman Church, and was also proof of the dangers of sectarian claims to perfection which had turned the world upside down in the Interregnum. Melancholy, enthusiasm and mystical theology went hand in hand for Anglican apologists and critics of Catholicism. With this in mind, we are now better situated to understand the greatest Restoration debate concerning mystical theology between Edward Stillingfleet and Serenus Cressy, one which was fuelled by the publication of Benedictine works of mystical theology and Cressy’s very public conversion to Catholicism, and underpinned by the rhetoric of enthusiasm this chapter has explored.

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<sup>600</sup> John Norris, *Letters concerning the love of God between the author of the Proposal to the ladies and Mr. John Norris, wherein his late discourse, shewing that it ought to be intire and exclusive of all other loves, is further cleared and justified* (London, 1695), sigs. A7<sup>r</sup>-A8<sup>v</sup>.



## Chapter 4: Serenus Cressy and Mysticks in Restoration England

When Inglesant had been last in Oxford, the secession of [...] Serenus de Cressy, as he called himself in religion, had created a painful and disturbed impression. [...] A quick and accurate disputant, a fine and persuasive preacher, a man of sweet and attractive nature, and of natural and acquired refinement,—he was one of the leaders of the highest thought and culture of the University. When it was known, therefore, that this man, so admired and beloved, had seceded to Popery, the interest and excitement were very great, and one of Archbishop Usher's friends writes to him in pathetic words of the loss of this bright ornament of the Church, and of the danger to others which his example might cause.<sup>601</sup>

John Inglesant, the fictional creation of nineteenth-century writer Joseph Henry Shorthouse, accurately described the consequences of Serenus Cressy's conversion to Catholicism in 1646. In the year in which Charles I was captured by the Scots and the Newcastle Propositions and Westminster Confession of Faith proposed reforming the Church of England along Presbyterian lines, Cressy had, much like the fictional Inglesant, found himself drawn towards the stability of Catholicism in the face of turbulent struggles over the direction of the English Church. Cressy became a target for many English Protestants who were intent on disproving his works of controversy concerning the merits of Catholicism. Moreover, he found himself targeted due to the worries of his critics that his conversion and the positive representation of the Catholic religious orders in his publications may tempt more to convert. Previous high profile converts to Catholicism included Toby Matthew, who promoted the match of Charles with the Spanish Infanta, and Richard Crashaw who, like Cressy, had been a central member of the Church of England before the Civil Wars and converted while in exile abroad in the late 1640s.<sup>602</sup> Cressy was the latest in a succession of converts and was unafraid of defending himself in print against his one-time co-religionists.<sup>603</sup>

If Shorthouse's account of Cressy as a 'striking and attractive man' with a 'lofty and refined expression' is taken to be pure fictional aggrandizement, his description of Cressy's advice to Inglesant about 'the path of perfect self-denial open before him,—renunciation, not

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<sup>601</sup> Joseph Henry Shorthouse, *John Inglesant: A Romance* (New York: Macmillan, 1882), p 197.

<sup>602</sup> Both Matthew and Crashaw were heavily influenced by the mystical theology of Counter-Reformation titan Teresa of Avila. Matthew's life of Teresa, published as *The Flaming Hart or The Life of the Glorious S. Teresa* (Antwerp, 1642) was dedicated to Henrietta Maria, whom apparently had a great fondness for the saint and 'the holy Religious woemen of her Angelicall Order' (sig. \*2<sup>v</sup>). Crashaw's *Steps to the temple. Sacred poems, with other delights of the muses* (London, 1646) contained two poems dedicated to Teresa (see pp. 79- 86). For a more detailed analysis of both see Chance Woods, 'Reading the Catholic Mystical Corpus in Seventeenth-Century England' (Unpublished MA Thesis: Vanderbilt University, 2012).

<sup>603</sup> All of these men had the support of the royal family at some stage of their lives; Matthew had close links with Charles I and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham; Crashaw was lifted out of destitution while in exile in Paris through the support of Henrietta Maria, and Cressy was given money by the Queen to fund his travels to Douai to become a Benedictine monk.

of pleasure, nor even of the world, but of himself, of his intellect, of his very life' rings true of Cressy's ascetical character.<sup>604</sup> Cressy, more than any other figure in Restoration England, can be seen as the 'public face' of mystical theology. Augustine Baker's construction of a canon of mysticks had proved controversial among the Benedictines of Douai, Cambrai and Paris, but proved even more divisive when exposed to a larger and decidedly less sympathetic audience in England in the late seventeenth century. While 'Bakerism' and the concept of a canon of mysticks has mostly been limited to its immediate Benedictine context, this chapter argues that it is equally enlightening to explore the role such concepts played in wider polemical discourse. As we will see, mysticks featured in debates concerning tradition and infallibility argued between Cressy and his two chief opponents, William Chillingworth and Edward Stillingfleet. Through an exploration of the published works of Benedictines Gertrude More, Augustine Baker (via Cressy's *Sancta Sophia*) and Peter Salvin, as well as Cressy's works of controversy and his edition of Julian of Norwich, this chapter resituates the debates which were ongoing within the English Benedictine congregation into the larger polemical debates between Catholics and their Protestant critics in Restoration England.

This chapter has two main narratives. The first is the struggle of Benedictine authors to validate mystical theology as authentically Catholic in the face of sectarians harnessing it for their own spiritual needs. What emerges is a constant awareness that mystical theology was not solely the interest of the Benedictines in England and had a large sectarian following. Cressy's *Exomologesis* and *Sancta Sophia*, as well as Peter Salvin's *The Kingdom of God in the Soule*, reveal an underlying paranoia over their readership. They tried to ensure that their works were only read by devout Catholic readers of suitable spiritual experience, rather than the radical sectarians they saw as discrediting the validity of mystical theology. The second narrative is the ongoing debate between Catholics and defenders of the Church of England about the merits of tradition over *sola Scriptura*, in which mystical theology played a secondary but important role. Cressy would prove to be at the epicentre of this debate for much of the later seventeenth century. The Catholic Church from the early Middle Ages had believed in a fundamental harmony between Scripture and the Church as the norms of faith and doctrine. They were not parallel sources, but mutually linked; the Church taught what the Scriptures contained and the Scriptures contained what the Church taught.<sup>605</sup> Derived from the Latin *traditio* which means 'handing over' or 'handing down', tradition became a way to interpret Scripture as the Apostles had done; the handing down of the

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<sup>604</sup> Shorthouse, *John Inglesant*, p. 203.

<sup>605</sup> George H. Tavard, *The Seventeenth-Century Tradition: A Study in Recusant Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 1. See also idem., *Holy Writ or Holy Church: The crisis of the Protestant Reformation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1959).

correct way to interpret Scripture against heretical individualistic interpretations. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries however, tradition became a second source of revelation, seen in addition to Scripture, which God had provided to speak on issues which Scripture did not. This was an ‘unwritten tradition’, passed down from one generation to the next, which allowed the Catholic Church special insights into the true meaning of the scriptural issues. It was this type of ‘unwritten tradition’ or special form of revelation inaccessible to every Christian reader of the Bible that the magisterial Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century had taken greatest issue with.<sup>606</sup>

This is not to say that Protestants in England did not harness the Church Fathers in their arguments, or outright rejected their value as interpreters of Scripture. In the writings of Elizabethan apologetics, who sought to champion the Elizabethan Settlement, they were read as *testes veritatis* or witnesses to the truth. At a time when the Church of England was charged with innovation and novelty, historical continuity was found by tracing an ‘invisible Church’ of true believers found in groups such as the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Hussites; the most recognisable form of which appeared in John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*.<sup>607</sup> The history of Christianity was split into three distinct phases by Protestants: the golden age of the primitive Christianity, the age of decline, innovation and superstition, and the age of revival and reform. Appealing to authors from this first ‘golden age’ served Church of England apologists well, although they by no means agreed on how long this primitive age had lasted.<sup>608</sup> The Fathers then functioned as patristic evidence against the errors of the Church of Rome, but to interpret Scripture or supplement it with the authority of the Fathers was to fall into one of the most pernicious errors of the Roman Church. Yet after gaining influence under the Laudian regime and then coming under attack during the Commonwealth, the Fathers became essential to those justifying the Episcopal nature of the Restoration Church.<sup>609</sup> Divines began appealing to the consensus of the Fathers on a range of issues, something Elizabethan divines would have found disturbing. Appealing to the

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<sup>606</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 93.

<sup>607</sup> John Foxe, *Actes And Monuments Of Matters Most Specieall And Memorable, Happenyng In The Church With An Universall History Of The Same* (London, 1583), see references such as the ‘godly learned man John Wickliffe’ and ‘John Husse, a notable learned man, and a singulare preacher at that time in the Uniuersitye of Prage’ (pp. 32, 553). This attitude was gradually eroded however. As Kristen Poole has shown, ‘the secret gatherings which preserved true religion during the Marian period of papist oppression were one thing- the separatist impulses which destabilized a peaceful Protestant church were another’. In the seventeenth century these ‘small cells of believers’ lost their standing as true believers and became known more as ‘sects engaging in a bewildering array of often bizarre religious and social practices’, see her *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>608</sup> John C. English, ‘The Duration of the Primitive Church: An Issue for Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Anglicans’, *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2004), pp. 35-52.

<sup>609</sup> See for example Henry Hammond, *Of schisme a defence of the Church of England against the exceptions of the Romanists* (London, 1653) which rejected claims of schism by Catholic authors by comparing the Church of England to writers from the first 300 years of Christianity.

Fathers was now seen as a defence against the radical ideas of direct inspiration, as well as Catholic claims to revelation and miracles, and patristic sources became the only reliable source of truth.<sup>610</sup> The past was thus analysed, criticised and reimagined in a constant cycle as competing ideologies were defended, tested and disproved across the seventeenth century.<sup>611</sup> It was this ongoing debate between Catholics and Protestants on the interpretation and limitations of Scripture and unwritten traditions in which Cressy embroiled himself in his works of controversy. Mysticks, in this setting, were exposed by his critics as ideal proof that revelation by unwritten tradition, found in those authors, was often conflicted, confusing and sometimes heretical.

### **Serenus Cressy's Conversion Narrative**

To understand the nature of the fierce opposition to Cressy, we first need to understand his conversion to Catholicism. After taking a B.A and M.A at Oxford, he was elected Fellow of Merton College and took orders in the Church of England, becoming chaplain to Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, and then Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland. The Cary family was shrouded in controversy on account of Lucius's mother, Elizabeth Cary, converting to Catholicism in 1626. Estranged from her husband, Elizabeth avoided poverty through the support of fellow Roman Catholic converts such as Mary, countess of Buckingham; Susan, countess of Denbigh; and Katherine, duchess of Buckingham—the mother, sister, and wife of the king's favourite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.<sup>612</sup> Through the actions of the Benedictine Cuthbert Fursdon, Elizabeth's four daughters, Anne, Lucy, Mary, and Elizabeth became Benedictine nuns at Cambrai. Fursdon was a 'living example of Baker's teaching' and had converted to Catholicism when Baker had lived in the house of his father, Philip Fursdon, in Devon in 1620. It was here that Fursdon in turn influenced Cressy to convert to

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<sup>610</sup> Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 397- 400. The fundamental difference between Catholic and Church of England claims in the Restoration was that Scripture was (only just) maintained as containing all things necessary to salvation, and tradition was an interpreter, not a supplement. Unlike Catholicism after the Council of Trent, the Church of England did not claim to be infallible and the period saw more recusants describe tradition with fewer and fewer references to patristic authors, and more to later ones.

<sup>611</sup> Recent work by Matthew Neufeld has revealed how the Restoration regime consciously patronized works which portrayed the 'Puritan impulse' as the cause of the Civil War and did not discourage works which stressed the sufferings of loyalist clergy, politicians and soldiers at the hands of the Long Parliament. The use of the Fathers in such a way undoubtedly fed into this larger polemic of the Church of England as a line of defence against sectarian enthusiasm; Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), esp. ch. 1.

<sup>612</sup> Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary, Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2014 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4835, accessed 27 April 2015]

Catholicism.<sup>613</sup> When Elizabeth Cary died in 1639, she was buried at Somerset House by the Capuchins with special permission from Henrietta Maria, who reportedly continued to support the Cary children after their mother's death.<sup>614</sup>

Cressy was part of a group of scholars gathered by Falkland known as the Great Tew Circle. Alongside Cressy and Falkland, other members of the group included theologian William Chillingworth, Oxford divines George Morley and Gilbert Sheldon, poet Edmund Waller, future Earl of Clarendon Edward Hyde, Thomas Barlow, and Katherine Jones, Viscountess Ranelagh, a friend of Falkland, patron of John Dury and Samuel Hartlib, and scientific pioneer in her own right.<sup>615</sup> At the core of the group was the collaboration between Falkland and Chillingworth to formulate a moderate and rational form of religion as a defence against Roman Catholicism. They believed that orthodoxy consisted of the part of Scripture upon which all Christians, despite their differences, were agreed upon; the part which was plain and clear and impossible to create further controversy from. With this came an attack on unwritten traditions, which were criticised as confusing and unclear. The Fathers and Church Councils were equally perplexing and seen as vulnerable to error. Thus appealing to anything beyond the Bible would only guarantee more controversy.<sup>616</sup>

At Great Tew, just eighteen miles from Oxford, visitors could access their host's impressive library and walk in the grounds, the ideal setting for theological, ethical and political discussion. Away from the mainstream political environment, room was given to discuss religious sincerity and explore how civil harmony could be maintained.<sup>617</sup> Falkland had retreated to the estate to escape the efforts of his mother and her consort to convert him to Catholicism.<sup>618</sup> Chillingworth and Falkland were both attracted to the idea of a strong and confident Church which could provide them with a sure and certain account of the Christian faith, and were influenced by the writings of Fausto Sozzini who attacked Catholic claims of infallibility and special powers of interpretation. His teaching was that the message of Scripture and the doctrines necessary for salvation were plain and simple, and therefore no

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<sup>613</sup> Lunn, *The English Benedictines*, p. 205.

<sup>614</sup> Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, p. 147.

<sup>615</sup> See Ruth Connolly, "'A Wise and Godly Sybilla': Viscountess Ranelagh and the Politics of International Protestantism", in Sylvia Brown (ed.), *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 285-306; Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ch. 5.

<sup>616</sup> B. H. G. Wormald, *Clarendon: Politics, History & Religion, 1640-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 248-51. Jean Daillé's *The Use of the Fathers* was vital in these attacks on the errors of the Fathers; for its manifold uses in the seventeenth century see Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, esp. ch. 4.

<sup>617</sup> Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 64.

<sup>618</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1987), p. 168.

man needed to look to the Church for any major decisions about doctrine.<sup>619</sup> Falkland himself, dismayed by the state of Christendom, thought that the clergy had been prone to ambition and self-interest, especially in intervening in affairs of the state.<sup>620</sup>

When Falkland died at the battle of Newbury, apparently through suicide caused by the misery of the Civil Wars, Cressy's world began to alter radically.<sup>621</sup> His autobiography, *Exomologesis*, first published in 1647, revealed the severe impacts of the Civil Wars on his state of mind in the years before becoming a Benedictine in 1648. The work was so controversial that Hugh Trevor-Roper has likened it to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, both of which were a 'body-blow delivered at a reeling institution'.<sup>622</sup> Taking employment as tutor to Charles Berkeley, he largely escaped the violence by traveling across the Continent, retreating 'into places less frequented by passengers'.<sup>623</sup> Cressy kept an eye on events, however, noting with shock how 'peevisish ignorant Presbyterians' had persuaded the nation to give up the Church they had been raised in, and wondered how in 'quarrels against Episcopall Tyranny' they had managed to 'perswade a Nation to accept of a Presbyterian Tyranny, infinitely more unreasonable and intolerable' all on the 'groundlesse suspicion that the King had a designe to change his Religion'.<sup>624</sup> His horror at events unfolding in England was alleviated by instruction from Catholics in Paris, who after a lengthy period had eased his mind 'into a more calme temper' and helped him focus on his new task of finding a Church he could join on the assumption that the Church of England would fall.<sup>625</sup>

Initially Cressy did not even consider Catholicism. Armed with Chillingworth's work, he believed that he could 'evidently and demonstratively destroy' the main foundation of the Roman Church, being infallibility. He also immediately discounted the Anabaptists and Familists as 'confused troopes of ignorant dreaming spirits' whose writings he could not engage with because of how 'obscure they are, and afraid of the light'. His other options,

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<sup>619</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, p. 69. Although Socinians were happy to accept that churches and clerics played a role in spreading and defending the Christian faith. See also H. J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951). Falkland was apparently 'the first Socinian in England', and Cressy himself supposedly boasted that he was 'the first that brought Socinus's bookes' into England; Andrew Clark (ed.), *Brief Lives, chiefly of Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between the Years 1669 & 1696* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), p. 150.

<sup>620</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, p. 85.

<sup>621</sup> David L. Smith, 'Cary, Lucius, second Viscount Falkland (1609/10–1643)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2014 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4841>, accessed 27 April 2015]

<sup>622</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, p. 184.

<sup>623</sup> Cressy, *Exomologesis* (1647), p. 9.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. Cressy also condemned the sects 'whose essentiall grounds are Scripture alone, with a renouncing of all visible authority to interpret it' yet 'assume to themselves an authority to inforce their opinions upon the consciences of others' (p. 11).

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Lutheranism, Calvinism and Socinianism, all proved equally unattractive. The Socinians were the most agreeable, but he found their trampling on the authority of ‘Fathers and Councils’ intolerable. Unable to find any more books of their doctrines in France or Italy, he relied on his time at Great Tew to inform his opinion. He concluded that he would not detail his exceptions to particular doctrines, ‘for fear [...] I should endanger to distill the infectious poison of them in a country, where, God be blessed, they are utterly unknown’. Calvinism and Lutheranism were also quickly dispelled as lesser versions of the Church of England, both of whom rejected tradition in favour of private spirit, condemned the government of bishops which had existed since the time of the Apostles, and professed a hatred towards peace and reunion with the Catholic Church. Cressy gave little credit to the ‘prodigious personal qualities of *Luther*, & *Calvin*, which shewed them to be persons extremely unfit to be relied upon, or acknowledged for *Apostles*, and *Reformers*’.<sup>626</sup>

Cressy struggled to decide on what to do as the ‘Church wherein I had been bred e’re this time being almost ready to expire’.<sup>627</sup> Catholicism became the only option, and after a long engagement with the arguments of Chillingworth which will be explored in more detail below, Cressy converted. After an extremely long section of his autobiography which detailed his every objection to Chillingworth along with a microscopic analysis of the tenets of Catholicism, his narrative was interrupted by a sudden burst of poetic language which deserves reproducing in full:

Having shutt mine eyes to all manner of worldly endes and designes; yea resolving to follow truth whither soever it would leade me, though quite out of sight of Countrey, freinds or estate, at length by the mercifull goodnesse of God I found my selfe in inward safety and repose in the midst of that *Citty sett upon an hill, whose builder and maker is God, whose foundations are emerauds and Saphirs, and Jesus Christ himselfe the chief corner stone: a city, that is at unity within it selfe*, as being ordered and policed by the *Spirit of Unity it selfe; a city* not enlightened with the *meteors* or *Comets* of a *private Spirit*, or changeable *humane reason*, but with the *glory of God*, and *light of the Lambe*: Lastly, a *City* that for above sixteen hudedre yeares together hath resisted all the tempests that the fury of men, or malice of hell could raise against it, and if Christs promises may be trusted to, and his Omnipotence be relied upon; shall continue so till his second coming. *To him be glory for ever and ever.*<sup>628</sup>

Despite all doctrinal controversy, his acceptance of Catholicism was made easy by the holiness of its members, in which mystical theology played a central role. Cressy had admitted earlier in the work that his treatise was ‘a Story rather than a controversie’ and thus

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<sup>626</sup> Ibid., pp. 40- 47. Luther is cast as an ex-monk who had thrown away his habit to give free scope to his lust for a nun, while Calvin had proven himself through his arguments with Sebastian Castellio to be a man of pride, envy and malice (pp. 86-94).

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid., pp. 568-69.

above all else, it was the ‘beauty of Holinesse’, described as a jewel that could only be found in Catholicism, which diminished his objections to the point he wished himself to never be separated ‘from so heavenly a Companion’.<sup>629</sup> In the writings of Charles Borromeo and Francis de Sales he found satisfactory answers to all the objections of Protestants.<sup>630</sup> His time in Paris, while receiving instruction from Henry Holden, a doctor of the Sorbonne, lead him to visit a monastery of the Carthusians to witness men whose ‘conversation was onely with God’. As a result they experienced ‘inward ravishings of the soule, the spiritual embraces which their celestiall Bridegroom affords them many times’.<sup>631</sup>

Cressy refused to believe that God would have willingly chosen a ‘*debauched, perjured, sacrilegious, Apostate Monke of Germany*’ or a ‘*furious Gladiatour of Swizzerland*’ as his messengers, only to leave ‘such persons enflamed with his love’ as the Carthusians in erroneous doctrines of ‘dreggs & pollutions’. If any Reformation were needed, surely God would have chosen the Carthusians to spread that message. That God had not moved the Carthusians to act in centuries was proof that the Reformation had been unfounded and based on a ‘pretended new *Evangelicall light*’. Cressy made it his objective to find out as much about their ‘*methods of Devotion and spirituality*’ as possible from those eminent in practicing it. The result was monumental. Cressy found that ‘*Mysticall Theology*’ was not the ‘*Morall Philosophy of the Platonists*’ which had been ‘cloathed in abstruse, *sublime and Metaphoricall termes*’ to render the user ‘more *phantasticall* and *selfe-conceited*’, but something altogether different:

Mysticall Theology being nothing else in general, but certain rules by the practise whereof a virtuous *Christian* might attaine to a *nearer*, a more *familiar*, and beyond all expression comfortable conversation with God: wherein he is taught first to purge himselfe of all *pollutions* of sinne and wordly lusts, to possesse himselfe of all *Christian* virtues, and by such meanes to prepare himselfe for an union with the heavenly majesty.<sup>632</sup>

These blessings came from meditating on heavenly mysteries, resigning the will to God by denudation, mortification and annihilation, and contemplating the divine without any medium. The results of this process were strange effects, such as elevations or ecstasies, which often came against the will of the individual. In order to prove these were ‘neither dreames of ignorant soules, nor sublime extravagances of soaring *spirits*’, Cressy referenced a canon of mystick authors to prove his point. Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and Pico della Mirandola had all ‘written uniformly on the same subject’ in the last ages, alongside others who had arrived at the perfection of contemplation such as

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., pp. 625-26.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., p. 631.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., p. 635.



Isidore the Farmer, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, and Gregory Lopez.<sup>633</sup> This canon of mysticks had all achieved what St. Paul described in Galatians 2:20, ‘I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’. Aware that Galatians 2:19 ‘For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God’ was a favourite verse in antinomian circles, Cressy immediately followed this up with a condemnation of the Anabaptists and Familists who had ‘certaine *counterfeitings* of such a *mysticall familiarity* with God joined with strange motions and effects’ which only proved they were ‘farre from being cleansed of their carnall lusts, pride, malice &c.’.<sup>634</sup> Cressy finished justifying mystical theology by referencing Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Francis de Sales and Borromeo as perfect examples from the recent past, before advising the reader to further consult the writings of Tauler, Harphius, John of Ruysbroeck, Teresa of Avila and the rare treatise *The Evangelical Pearl*.<sup>635</sup> This original edition, published the year before he travelled to Douai with financial assistance from Henrietta Maria, suggests that Cressy had a substantial knowledge of the ‘mystick canon’ before actually becoming a Benedictine.

By the time of the second edition of his work in 1653 Cressy had spent around two years as chaplain to the Benedictine nuns in Paris, where followers of Augustine Baker were numerous. As a result his ‘Bakerist’ preferences were fully developed. Replacing *The Evangelical Pearl* at the end of the list of mysticks was a reference to ‘the severall *Treatises*, as yet *Manuscripts*, of that late *very sublime contemplative*, *F. Augustine Baker*, a *Monke of our English Congregation of the Holy Order of S. Benet*’, which Cressy had first ‘happily met withal at *Rome*’ before his conversion to Catholicism in 1646.<sup>636</sup> It was because of Baker’s manuscripts that Cressy found himself pressed to reconcile himself to the Catholic faith as he ‘thirsted to become capable of practising those heavenly instructions’. Travelling from Rome to Douai, he passed through Cambrai and saw more of Baker’s writings, ‘the *Spirit* of which did eminently shew it selfe in the lives of those excellently devout and perfectly religious *Benedictine Dames* there’. These Benedictine nuns apparently assured him that the same was practiced at Douai, and when Cressy found this to be so, he changed his plan of joining the Carthusians and instead settled at Douai. Cressy had mentioned none of this in the first edition because:

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<sup>633</sup> Ibid., p. 637. Cressy was at pains to point out that what Bernard, Aquinas, Bonaventure and Mirandola wrote on the topic was not ‘meere speculation, but comprehended, practised and felt by them’.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid., p. 638.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid., p. 640.

<sup>636</sup> Serenus Cressy, *Exomologesis: or, A faithfull narration of the occasion and motives of the conversion unto Catholike unity of Hugh-Paulin de Cressy, lately Deane of Laghlin, &c. in Ireland, and Prebend of Windsore in England. Now a second time printed; with additions and explications, by the same author, who now calls himself, B. Serenus Cressy, religious priest of the holy order of S. Benedict, in the convent of S. Gregory in Doway* (Paris, 1653), p. 464 (page incorrectly paginated as p. 446).

I forbore in the former *Impression* to mention this Author among the rest, because I thought his books were confin'd to *Cambray*, where they were written, or to his own *Convent at Dowvy*: But being since assured, that they were largely dispersed, even among the secular Clergy, I could not without ingratitude now omit his name, and I hope that e're long a full account of his *spiritual instructions* concerning the *severall Degrees of Internall Prayer*, shal be happily communicated to the world, methodically digested, & authoritatively published, to the glory of God, & great advancement of devout souls in his divine love.<sup>637</sup>

Yet Cressy's narrative had changed in more ways than simply reworking his list of mysticks. In the 1653 edition he silently altered his definition of mystical theology as well. We can see this best when comparing his two definitions side by side:

#### Exomologesis, 1647 edition

Mysticall Theology being nothing else in general, but certain rules by the practise whereof a vertuous *Christian* might attaine to a *nearer*, a more *familiar*, and beyond all expression comfortable conversation with God: wherein he is taught first to purge himselfe of all *pollutions* of sinne and wordly lusts, to possesse himselfe of all *Christian vertues*, and by such meanes to prepare himselfe for an union with the heavenly majesty.

#### Exomologesis, 1653 edition

Mysticall Theology being nothing else in general, but certain Rules, by the practise whereof a vertuous *Christian* might attain to a *nearer*, a more *familiar*, and beyond all expression comfortable conversation with God, by arriving unto, not only a belief, but also an experimentall knowledge and perception of his *divine presence*, after an inexpressible manner in the soul; wherein he is taught first to purge himself of all *pollutions* of sin and worldly lusts, to possesse himself of all *Christian vertues*, and by such meanes to prepare himself for an union with the heavenly Majesty.

The change is minor, but alters the emphasis of the definition in a major way. In the 1647 edition the goal of mystical theology reads as the preparation for union with God. In the 1653 edition however, this definition is punctuated by an assertion that the result of mystical theology was an 'experimental knowledge and perception of his *divine presence* in the soul', while union with God now becomes the reward of the next life, with glimpses of this union through mystical experience.<sup>638</sup> This change may be explained by another subtle addition to the 1653 edition. Whereas before Cressy had spoken of the counterfeiting of 'mystical familiarity with God' as a trait of the Anabaptists and Familists, they were 'yet now daily out-done by those Sects in England, as at *Malton* in Yorkshire, London, and other places, where they abound' in the 1653 edition.<sup>639</sup> Cressy specifically applied this to 'Quakers &

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., p. 442.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid., p. 460 (page incorrectly paginated as p. 434).

<sup>639</sup> Ibid., p. 462.

Ranters' and the reference to Malton coincided with George Fox's successful trip there in 1652. But there is every likelihood that this concern was also a reference to the antinomian and Familist circles of John Everard and Giles Randall, who between them had exposed London populations to the teachings of the *Theologia Germanica*, Pseudo-Dionysius, Nicholas of Cusa and, perhaps most worryingly for Cressy, the writings of Benet of Canfield, a Capuchin monk. Is it a step too far to suggest that Cressy altered his definition of mystical theology in reaction to the antinomian and perfectionist sermons preached by John Everard using the exact same source material so treasured by Cressy and his idol Augustine Baker? Or to suggest such a change occurred due to Randall publishing his edition of the *Theologia Germanica* in 1646, a work directly identified as fuelling the 'heretical underground' in London in the 1630s and 1640s? Regardless, Cressy's alterations suggest a very real worry about mystical theology being used by non-Catholics and Cressy should be credited as too good a scholar and bibliophile not to have known about these works appearing between the two editions of his autobiography.

### **Chillingworth and Cressy: Scripture and Tradition**

If we can only forge a tentative link between Cressy's work and the ongoing sectarian troubles of London, we can with certainty turn to the issue which dominated Cressy's autobiography; the ongoing polemical debates between Catholics and Protestants over tradition and Scripture. For Cressy's work was not so much an introspective work of piety but rather a gallant political statement accusing Protestantism of schism. English Protestants, he argued in one bold statement, once claimed that in separating from the Catholic Church 'there was made a rent only in the semelesse garment of Christ, but yet so that the parts hung together still, allowing the Catholique Church to be a true Church of Christ, but preferring their part of it as better cleansed and washed than the other'. But now 'Christs garment is torne by them into I know not how many rags, all pluck'd entirely from one another, and this with such violence and injustice, as Mahomet himselfe would have abhorred'.<sup>640</sup> Cressy's main concern was the writings of William Chillingworth, whose *The Religion of Protestants* (1638) was the main reason Cressy had originally discounted Catholicism in his search for a replacement to the Church of England.<sup>641</sup>

Both Cressy and Chillingworth inherited decades of writings on controversy between Catholics and Protestants. In a period when failure to reply to critics was a sign of

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<sup>640</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>641</sup> Cressy noted his 'long and inward friendship' with Chillingworth, and revealed with sadness that he had to attack his work because 'his book alone had the principall influence upon me to shut up my entrance into Catholique unity'. Regardless he promised to be 'extremely tender of his reputation' (p. 90).

defeat, both sides developed what Michael Questier has labelled a ‘systematic answering machine’ to reply to their opponents, resulting in a vast and often confusing body of literature.<sup>642</sup> Formal disputations between Catholics and Protestants, in the presence of a lay audience, were the ‘front line of Reformation’ and shaped the controversies between Catholics and Protestants which appeared in print. Grounded in the classical and Renaissance Aristotelian ideal of collective wisdom, calling for a disputation on matters of controversy was presented as seeking counsel from disputants, Church and God. As a result students at seminaries such as Douai were trained in the art of disputation to prepare them for missionary efforts and help respond to Protestant controversialists. At Oxford and Cambridge they formed part of the progression for BA and MA candidates, and from Elizabeth I’s reign onward these candidates were trained in anti-Catholic argument.<sup>643</sup> James I had been particularly fond of the format; the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 between Puritans and Church of England divines being an important example. More were held in 1622 during which the Jesuit John Fisher, then imprisoned by James I, was called to defend the argument that the Roman Church was the only one continually visible since the time of Christ, and was therefore teaching the doctrines necessary to salvation as passed down through a succession of pastors and doctors. The arguments had been ongoing since Fisher’s first work, *A Treatise of Faith* in 1605, and Fisher, Anthony Wooton, John White and William Laud continued to argue in print long after.<sup>644</sup>

Both Cressy and Chillingworth must have followed these disputations with great interest. But both men were similar in the sense that they longed to find some certainty in religion. Chillingworth had renounced the Church of England in 1629 under the influence of Fisher and left England in 1630 to travel to Douai. Within a year he had returned, finding no more reassurance in Catholicism than he had in Protestantism. For Chillingworth the main concern was finding a Church that was without error. As Catholicism claimed to be an infallible teacher, and the Epistle to the Ephesians suggested a ‘succession of Pastors’ were needed to guide men away from error, Chillingworth had thought it necessary to convert for the sake of his salvation.<sup>645</sup> These beliefs were soon discarded for the argument that Scripture was the only word of God, and that any doctrine not found there could not be

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<sup>642</sup> Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580- 1625*, p. 18.

<sup>643</sup> See Joshua Rodda, *Public Religious Disputation in England, 1558-1626* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>644</sup> John Fisher, *A treatise of faith wherein is briefly, and plainly [sic] shewed, a direct way, by which every man may resolve, and settle his minde, in all doubttes, questions, or controversies, concerning matters of faith* (Saint-Omer, 1605); idem., *A catalogue of diuers visible professors of the Catholike faith Which sheweth, that the Roman Church hath byn (as the true Church must be) continually visible, in all ages since Christ* (Saint-Omer, 1614).

<sup>645</sup> William Chillingworth, *Additional discourses of Mr. Chillingworth never before printed* (London, 1686), pp. 95-96.

believed with the same degree of faith. Chillingworth also reassessed Ephesians 4:11-13, discovering that it did not argue for a continuous succession of pastors, but rather showed that God had granted Apostles and prophets in ancient times the gifts of ministry and edification. He argued that they still continued to dispense these gifts, ‘for who can deny but S. *Paul* the Apostle and Doctor of the Gentiles, and S. *John* the Evangelist and Prophet, do at this very time (by their writings, though not by their persons) do the work of the ministry, consummate the Saints, and Edifie the Body of Christ’.<sup>646</sup> It was the Scripture of the Apostles, prophets and evangelists which ensured the individual was not carried off into error, not the infallible teachings of the Church of Rome.

By the time Chillingworth had returned to Protestantism and taken up residence in the Great Tew circle, he was about to wade into a difficult ongoing debate between the Jesuit Edward Knott and Christopher Potter, provost of Queen's College, Oxford. In 1630 Knott declared that salvation could not be given to both Catholics and Protestants and called for them to be ‘receaved into the bosome, of the holy Catholicke Apostolicke Romane Church’.<sup>647</sup> Potter had replied that Protestants only rejected the ‘corrupt superadditions to the faith’ added by popery, and had corrected these abuses without schism, with all Protestants agreeing on fundamental points of faith as found in Scripture and the Fathers.<sup>648</sup> ‘No Protestant denies the Catholique Church to bee one [i.e. the true Christian Church]’ insisted Potter, but ‘they all deny the present Romane to be that one Catholique’.<sup>649</sup> Knott would reply again in *Mercy & Truth* (1634), and upon learning Chillingworth would reply in Potter’s place, wrote a brief work accusing him of Socinianism, questioning whether in replying his true intention was ‘to defend *Protestantisme*, or covertly to vent *Socinianisme*’.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Ibid., p. 97. Chillingworth argued that the scriptural text of Ephesians 4:11-13 ‘And he gave some, Apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ’ had been misused by Catholics, who have connected 4:11 and 4:13 into ‘that he gave Apostles and Prophets, &c. which should continue, &c. until we all meet’.

<sup>647</sup> Edward Knott, *Charity mistaken, with the want whereof, Catholickes are unjustly charged for affirming, as they do with grief, that Protestancy unrepented destroyes salvation* (Saint-Omer, 1630), p. 130.

<sup>648</sup> Christopher Potter, *Want of charitie justly charged, on all such Romanists, as dare (without truth or modesty) affirme, that Protestancie destroyeth salvation in answer to a late popish pamphlet intituled Charity mistaken &c.* (Oxford, 1633), sig. \*\*3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>650</sup> Edward Knott, *A direction to be observed by N.N. if hee meane to proceede in answering the booke intituled Mercy and truth, or charity maintained by Catholiks &c.* (n.p., 1636), p. 5. See also Knott, *Mercy & truth. Or Charity maintayned by Catholiques By way of reply upon an answere lately framed by D. Potter to a treatise which had formerly proved, that charity was mistaken by Protestants* (Saint-Omer, 1634).

Chillingworth thus had a monumental task in writing his *Religion of Protestants*. The work itself argued for the infallibility of the Scriptures and that the ‘truth of Christianity is cleerely independent upon the truth of Popery’.<sup>651</sup> In his famous statement ‘The BIBLE, I say, The BIBLE only is the Religion of Protestants!’ Chillingworth stressed that the individual did not need to renounce his own judgement over religious matters in the way demanded by Rome, but should find the true sense of Scripture themselves and live according to it.<sup>652</sup> Reason, he insisted, could not be submitted to any external authority, and no man should give up his own rational conclusions for the Catholic Church’s pretentions of being the sole judge of truth.<sup>653</sup> The Church of Rome did not need to abolish or corrupt the Scriptures to gain tyranny over men’s consciences, but rather only needed to set itself up as the ‘*authoriz’d interpreter* of them, and the Authority of adding to them what doctrine she pleas’d under the title of *Traditions* or *Definitions*’. Scripture was innocent of any controversy, and if men sincerely submitted their judgements to Scripture, and would require nothing more of their adversary but to do the same, then it would be ‘impossible but that all controversies, touching things necessary and very profitable should be ended’.<sup>654</sup> Falkland, closest to Cressy before his conversion, had also waded into the debate by attacking the Catholic emphasis on tradition as judge of damnation. ‘I doe not believe all to be damned whom they damne’, wrote Falkland, ‘but I conceive all to be killed whom they killed’.<sup>655</sup>

It was into this world of religious controversy Cressy placed himself, and his answers to these accusations were swathed in typically extravagant imagery. Cressy maintained that the Church of England was a schism caused by the lust and avarice of the ‘Sacriligious Tyrant K. Henry 8’ and the Civil Wars had proven the ‘nationall sins’ of England which had caused God to make ‘such a spectacle of desolation’.<sup>656</sup> Echoing the charges of earlier Catholic controversialists, he accused Protestants of constantly branching off:

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<sup>651</sup> William Chillingworth, *The Religion Of Protestants A Safe Way To Salvation* (Oxford, 1638), p. 409 (unpaginated page).

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, p. 67.

<sup>653</sup> Gary Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 147.

<sup>654</sup> Chillingworth, *The Religion Of Protestants*, p. 54.

<sup>655</sup> Lucius Cary, *Of the infallibilitie of the Church of Rome* (Oxford, 1645), p. 9. Falkland believed that no one was put to death in antiquity for this crime and that Catholics have been the worst in present times, although he conceded that the Church of England had killed a few people ‘which is a little too much’ (p. 10).

<sup>656</sup> Cressy, *Exomologesis* (1653), p. 4. Cressy later blamed most of the problems of the Civil Wars on the ‘Calvinistical spirit’ in state and government since Elizabeth I, who now ‘glut themselves with Christian blood even to vomiting’ (p. 17). Later he reinforced this by stating English Catholics had been more loyal to the king than Calvinists or Lutherans (p. 47).

Yea so in love have they shewed themselves with *Schisme* [...] so zealous to renounce that precious legacy of *Peace*, which our Saviour at his last farewell to the world left to his Church, that they multiply division upon division even among themselves, making *Frusta de frusto* [i.e. threadbare], of the seamelesse garment of Christ, denying Communion to one another even for points in their own opinion of no considerable importance. The *Lutherans* will not communicate with the *Calvinists*, nor the *Remonstrants*, with the *Contra-remonstrants*, nor the *Separatists* with the *English Protestants*, And whatsoever union the *French-Calvinist Churches* boast of, they owe it entirely to the civill Power there, for if that would allow them the liberty, they would fall into as many devisions, as any of their brethren.<sup>657</sup>

It was secular interests that had caused these divisions and schisms, and on their death beds, ‘when all secular respects are silent’, many desired reconciliation with the Roman Church. Ultimately however, the Catholic faith was to be viewed as superior because of the ‘*the eminent rules of sanctity and spirituallity* taught by most prudent and pious directors, and practised after a manner, that nothing in any of the *Protestant Churches* approacheth neere unto it’, showing that even when addressing matters of controversy, the spiritual element of his conversion seemed to be at the forefront of his mind.<sup>658</sup>

On the issue of tradition, Cressy cast his analytical eye not over works of controversy, but rather original documents of the ancient Councils and Church Fathers. He found himself utterly convinced of the merits of tradition and of the need for official interpretation of the Scripture by the Catholic Church. Chillingworth had been wrong to cast the rule of faith as Scripture alone as this would only continue to succeed in ‘pulling down buildings, than raising new ones’. England had forsaken the ‘old and good wayes’ of so many saints, confessors, martyrs and bishops who had throughout history propagated Christianity and dispelled heresy, rather choosing ‘to walke every man in a severall path through those narrow, crooked and at least very dangerous, (because new) wayes of a proud selfe-assuming presumption in interpreting only-Scripture each man according to his own fancy & interest, following the example of no antiquity, but only ancient Heretiques’.<sup>659</sup>

On the charge of tyranny, Cressy mocked his Protestant adversaries for believing that the Catholic Church had invented ‘secret traditions’ in order to gain authority over the minds of men. ‘Where is the Cabinet and Magazine wherein they are stored?’ he jested, ‘when when will shee empty it?’ Tradition was the public practice and profession of the

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., p. 63. Cressy would ultimately frame God as the main reason for his conversion, above any matter of controversy. He spent hours in fervent prayer asking God for direction from the Holy Spirit, ‘vowing that, if God would be pleased to *set me on a rock higher than my selfe*, giving repose unto my minde [...] I would consecrate the remainder of my life to blesse and serve him in the best and strictest manner I could finde’ (p. 67).

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

Church, and was not some special trick used to settle dangerous controversies. The advent of printing had ensured that ‘nothing is reserved now in the breasts of the Church Governours, even the anciently most secret Ceremonies are divulged to all Mens knowledge’.<sup>660</sup> Tradition was now more visible than it had ever been before, giving Protestants no ground to dress it up as cunning tyranny.<sup>661</sup> By the end of the work Cressy had made his position clear; the Catholic Church was the depository of divine revelation and had authority from Christ to command things helpful to piety.<sup>662</sup>

This concludes what we can label as Cressy’s first foray into the world of Catholic-Protestant print controversy, although it would certainly not be his last. Some Protestant reactions to his *Exomologesis* had apparently pierced him ‘to the heart’.<sup>663</sup> Many accused him of leaving the Church of England in its greatest hour of need, while others accused him of converting to Catholicism on the ‘*hopes and promise of being to be admitted an idle Drone or Monk in the Charterhouse at Paris, where he might live as warmly, as lapt all over in Lambskins, and like a Bee in a plentiful hive fed with the purest amber honey*’. Having lost his living in England, Cressy was accused of fleeing abroad in the hopes of finding an easy life. Despite this his *Exomologesis* was apparently revered by English Catholics and was described as ‘*the golden calf*’ they ‘*fell down to and worshiped*’ as well as a work which had given ‘*a total overthrow to the Chillingworthians, and book and tenants of Lucius Lord Falkland*’.<sup>664</sup>

By the time of the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 a new theme had developed in Protestant opinions of Cressy. Concerns over his religious position began to

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid., pp. 125-29.

<sup>661</sup> Interestingly Cressy maintained that in the primitive Church certain traditions were kept secret among the ‘principall Ecclesiastical governours’ such as the ceremonies for conferring some sacraments, or the making of holy oil. This was done both to gain a reverence to the clergy as holy, but also not to expose such mysteries to heretics and insufficiently instructed Christians. Cressy justifies this with a reference to Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, ch. 1.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., p. 492. Cressy was making particular reference to the 1651 edition of Falkland’s letter which had a preface by John Pearson attacking *Exomologesis*. See Lucius Cary, *Sir Lucius Cary, late Lord Viscount of Falkland, his discourse of infallibility, with an answer to it: and his Lordships reply. Never before published. Together with Mr. Walter Mountague’s letter concerning the changing his religion* (London, 1651). Other Protestant reactions were milder. That bastion of the Church of England, Henry Hammond, had been sent a copy of *Exomologesis* by Cressy, and had invited him to return to England as his friend rather than antagonist, offering him sufficient funds to live comfortably and without harassment over his religion and conscience. Cressy politely rejected the offer on the eve of joining the Benedictines. See Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses an exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the most ancient and famous University of Oxford, from the fifteenth year of King Henry the Seventh, Dom. 1500, to the end of the year 1690 representing the birth, fortune, preferment, and death of all those authors and prelates, the great accidents of their lives, and the fate and character of their writings : to which are added, the Fasti, or, Annals, of the said university, for the same time. The Second Volume Compleating the Whole Work* (London, 1692), p. 386.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid., p. 387.



blur with concerns for his character in general. For while the Cressy of pre-Civil War England had been a man of good nature, manners and natural parts, the man that returned from over a decade as a Benedictine had changed beyond recognition. The fear was that Cressy had succumbed to some mutation after giving up ‘the refinedness of his soul’ by rejecting all earthly concerns and was now ‘possest with strange notions’, or ‘little better than a Melancholick’.<sup>665</sup> This was, of course, the result of Cressy’s full immersion into the writings of mystical theology and ‘Bakerism’. To this period before Cressy returned to England in 1660 we must now turn, both to understand the concerns of his critics in the Restoration period, who would use his enthusiasm for mystical theology to great effect in discrediting him, and also to explore how Cressy came to have such reverence for it.

### **Cressy’s Early Benedictine Activities**

Cressy does not seem to have adjusted easily to his new life as a Benedictine. At Ampleforth Abbey is a little known manuscript of his called *A treatise on the Passion* (dated 1652), written during his noviceship. It was written because he found himself ‘inept at meditation’, suggesting a difficulty in adjusting to his new surroundings. Eager to pass onto the contemplative mystical experiences he had yearned for at his conversion, Cressy was experiencing some frustration at this early stage. His ineptitude had forced him to ‘supplie it with my pen which every day writ downe what my spirit suggested to it upon the subject of our Lords passion’.<sup>666</sup> What was generated was a beautifully written and intimate conversion between Cressy and his soul in which he would repeatedly ask his soul to listen to the words and learn from them.

Cressy focused on Lamentations 1:12 ‘Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow’, and asked his soul to ‘interrupt thy present thoughts, make a truce with thy imployments and stoppe thy passage through this vaile of tears to listen to such a wofull crye’. Although Cressy identified the historical meaning of the text as the prophet Jeremiah’s weeping over the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, he asserted that it was spoken with a ‘spirit truly propheticall, that is looking forward & not backward’ to an event so intolerable that such language and lamentation was necessary, which was Christ’s crucifixion.<sup>667</sup> The words became those of Jesus on the cross, through whom ‘this sad text will be turned into amorous (not mournfull) language’ to invite all to contemplate Christ’s suffering, and to increase in affection towards him. ‘O my soule’ Cressy asked, ‘canst thou without confusion and astonishment look upon this text, and then

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> Ampleforth Abbey MS 45a, fol. 3.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid., fol. 9.

reflect upon thine owne insensibleness?’ Christ had used the words to draw Cressy’s soul closer to him, and the words had ‘called & drawne thee into this happie solitude and banishment, from the pollutions and vanities of the world’ to ‘contemplate the wonderfull mercies that he hath wrought for thee’.<sup>668</sup>

The text is too elegant to do justice to here, but the main body of the work involved Cressy using Christ’s crucifixion to inspire a more ascetic pattern within his soul. One passage outlined how:

The voice and loud call of Jesus has arrested & fixed thee here in this solitude O my soule, on purpose that thou maist be not only a gazing curious spectator, but which is more an imitator also of his painful bearing & tormenting sufferings [...] he has bine pleased to single thee out of a numerous croude of passengers what walke busily, and imploy their thoughts solicitously about these *insanias falsas* [lying follies], these *Vanitates Vanissimas* [worthless vanities].<sup>669</sup>

The call to contemplation could lead to unexpected results within the soul. After describing how the soul needed to be removed of any distractions and temptations (‘O my soule that hast renounced all other employments but attending on the Cross, bewaile the worlds ingratitude’), Cressy called upon the ‘proffe experimentall’ of ‘two authentical revelations made to two illuminated saintes of these later times namely St. Bridget and St Ca: of Sienna’, to describe how in contemplation ‘thy hart with excess of joy would breake a sunder’.<sup>670</sup> ‘Spirituell writers’ he noted, ‘may as they please write goodly directions & encouragements for soules in such a state of dereliction’, as the grief over sin and the suffering of Christ ‘is only a great and gracious trial of their fidelity and a preparation to new siblimer favours’.<sup>671</sup> Cressy ended the text with a call for his soul to always be attentive to the sacrifice and love of Christ.

On the front page of the manuscript two names are displayed. The first declared it was ‘Jane Meynells Booke’, who may have been the sister of Mary and Bridget, both Benedictine nuns at Cambrai in the late seventeenth century.<sup>672</sup> The second is ‘Jane Palmes her Book’. Jane Meynell was married to Marmaduke Palmes, suggesting the book stayed in

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<sup>668</sup> Ibid., fol. 13.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid., fol. 20.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid., fol. 250. Cressy also noted that the appearance of the devil could provide the direct opposite feeling during these experiences, as Bridget saw ‘his proper shape but for one moment & twinkling of an eye’ and would rather walk barefoot ‘in a path burning with fier till the day of judgement then to behold him a second time’ (fols. 250-51).

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., fols. 271-72.

<sup>672</sup> Her sisters were Mary Benedicta Meynell (CB127) and Bridget Teresa Meynell (CB126), both of whom were found using the *Who were the Nuns?* Electronic Database [<http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/>, accessed 01 June 2015]. The dating of late seventeenth century corresponds with Cressy being labelled as ‘Very Reverend’, a title he would only have earned around 1669 when he became a Cathedral Prior. See J. McCann ‘About Two Manuscripts’, *Ampleforth Journal*, Vol. 54 (1949), pp. 103-106, p. 104.

the family. The manuscript copy at Ampleforth is not the original by Cressy, who mentions at the beginning that he writes in ‘so ill a hand’, despite the copy being a very legible version. As the manuscript was gifted to Ampleforth in 1948 by a parish priest of Tow Law, it suggests that the work had a wider circulation among Catholics in England.<sup>673</sup> It is likely that the manuscript was copied during Cressy’s time as confessor to the Benedictine nuns at Paris between 1651-2, and then circulated among the nuns and their immediate families.<sup>674</sup>

Cressy’s early days as a Benedictine were dominated by almost continuous writing. There is substantial evidence from this formative period that he was actively trying to emulate his idol, Augustine Baker. In the National Library of Australia is another little known manuscript, which alongside his *Exomologesis* and *Treatise on the Passion*, suggests an exhaustive regime of writing. *Arbor Virtutum* was written in 1649 for Dame Mary Cary. Cressy had maintained links with the sisters of Falkland who were now at Cambrai. His affection for Dame Mary is obvious from the preface. God had given those who were aspiring to perfection many jewels of virtues and graces, Cressy informed her, and assured her that upon reading the book she would find she had already ‘a full and long possession of them’.<sup>675</sup> The *Arbor* was a translation of part of the work of a group of authors belonging to the Discalced Carmelites who taught at Salamanca between 1600 and 1725. For this reason they were normally attributed the name Salmanticenses.<sup>676</sup> Cressy had translated extracts with the nuns in mind, for he noted it contained ‘all whatsoever perfect soules need to know, or aspire unto’.<sup>677</sup> The work was mentioned several times in his *Exomologesis* despite Cressy believing it to be the work of one anonymous author famed for his ‘subtility, perspicuity, and profound solidity of judgement’.<sup>678</sup> The work made passing reference to mystical theology when discussing Matthew 5:8 ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God’ by outlining how understanding could come from a ‘deputation of the soule from images and errors’ which would generate a vision of God that was imperfect in this life. It did not allow knowledge of God, but rather the knowledge ‘that he is, and what he is not’.

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<sup>673</sup> I am grateful to Anselm Cramer at Ampleforth for illuminating me on the history of this manuscript and for being more than accommodating on my visit to view it.

<sup>674</sup> Cressy was apparently well connected and used these connections to find benefactors for the nuns, especially among ‘the Messieurs de Port Royal’, see Ruth Clark, *Strangers & Sojourners at Port Royal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 69.

<sup>675</sup> National Library of Australia MS 1097/13, unpaginated page ‘To the V. Rel. Dame, Dame Maria Cary’.

<sup>676</sup> F.L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1457.

<sup>677</sup> National Library of Australia MS 1097/13, unpaginated page, ‘To the V. Rel. Dame, Dame Maria Cary’.

<sup>678</sup> Cressy, *Exomologesis* (1653), p. 189.

‘Wee doe so much more perfectly know God’ the work advised, when we understand ‘he does exceede all whatsoever is comprehended by our understanding’.<sup>679</sup>

This snapshot of Cressy’s formative years as a Benedictine at Douai and then confessor to the nuns at Paris gives a sense that he was actively trying to follow in the footsteps of Baker. His own difficulties with meditation and his role as translator of texts for the nuns echoes much of Baker’s life with startling similarity. His time at Douai is characterised in *Arbor* as being one of constant study, during which he thought it unprofitable ‘if I have not a penne in my hand’.<sup>680</sup> Indeed the only reason Cressy had translated any of the extracts from Salmanticenses into English was in case ‘they might likewise be useful to you who have a capacity for anything that is good’, showing spiritual direction to be always forefront in his mind.<sup>681</sup> But Cressy was yet to publish what is considered his greatest work, his digestion of the manuscripts of Baker into his *Sancta Sophia*. That publication, along with many others from Benedictine authors in the late 1650s, would expose the practices of mystical theology and ‘Bakerism’ to a much wider audience and cement Cressy as a Catholic enthusiast in the minds of many of his critics.

### **Mystical Theology in Benedictine Publications**

1657 was a critical year for the Benedictines and for mystical theology. Peter Salvin’s *The Kingdom of God in the Soule*, Cressy’s *Sancta Sophia* and Gertrude More’s *The holy practises of a devine lover* all went to print, with More’s *The Spiritual Exercises* appearing a year later in 1658. When trying to understand this sudden spate of publications, it is best to first focus on Salvin’s *Kingdom of God*, a translation of the work of the Capuchin John Evangelist. In his abstract, Salvin noted that there was a ‘simple, pure and deiforme Exercise’ whereby God could be adored in the individual’s soul, an exercise ‘not conceptible to sense’ which involved ‘Abnegation, Resignation, Pure love, and naked fayth’ and resulted in a ‘perfect death’. This in turn gave rise to a divine light which guided the soul towards perfection.<sup>682</sup> This doctrine of mystical theology, found in Salvin’s book, was also to be found in the ‘Ideots Devotions’ (i.e. the *Spiritual Exercises* of More), and the *Sancta Sophia*, which contained the doctrines of Baker, ‘the pure Contemplative of this Later Age’.<sup>683</sup> This creation of the perfect kingdom within the soul had already been realized in the ‘true Benedictine nuns of our Ladies of Hope in Paris dedicating themselves for the conversion

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<sup>679</sup>National Library of Australia MS 1097/13, fols. 21-22.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., unpaginated page, ‘To the V. Rel. Dame, Dame Maria Cary’.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> Peter Salvin, *The Kingdom of God in the Soule* (Paris, 1657), unpaginated page entitled ‘Theperitia or Skill: And as it were the Abstract of this Booke’.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

of a Kingdome in this pure Contemplative state'.<sup>684</sup> It would appear that the Benedictines had reached a stage of confidence in the works of mystical theology they were producing, and saw it beneficial to all to produce printed versions of their texts.

Salvin's work revealed exactly who these publications were aimed at. *The Kingdom of God* contained two opening addresses to the reader, one for 'the Reader who is Catholike', and another for 'the Reader who is not Catholike'. The Catholic reader, who had detected a 'secret sympathy of thy soule' in reading the book should continue on to practice what was written inside.<sup>685</sup> This did not apply to the non-Catholic reader however. They were told to avoid the work entirely as it would be 'a sword in a Madmans hands to destroy himselfe, and others'. Salvin hinted that he had seen 'spirituall, mysticall, Catholic Bookes' fall into unfit hands, which had destroyed both the reader and the reputation of the book. Alongside the 'Holy Scripture promiscuously read', one can only wonder if, like Cressy, Salvin looked with horror at works of mystical theology fuelling the fires of antinomian and Familist circles in England under Everard and Randall. These works of Benedictine mystical theology were 'written for proficient, not beginners' he admonished, 'much lesse those who never intend to beginne at all'.<sup>686</sup>

If Salvin's work would teach the basics of mystical theology, then publication of the works of Gertrude More revealed the canon of mystick authors. *The Holy Practises* contained a catalogue of books aimed at helping those of a contemplative spirit, despite contradicting statements that the list was for 'None Other intended' than More herself. The list included Baker, Bonaventure, Benet of Canfield, Cassianus, Catherine of Siena, Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory the Great, Harphius, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, the *Imitatio Christi*, John of the Cross, Ruysbroeck, Gertrude the Great, Bridget of Sweden, Suso, Walter Hilton, Tauler and Teresa of Avila. The list was noticeably missing any reference to Jesuit authors, and this was to save the reader time, for they specialised in 'the active way [...] but in this contemplative way few or none hath appeared ever since their first institute above these hundred yeares'.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>684</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>687</sup> Gertrude More, *The holy practises of a devine lover, or, The saintly Ideots Devotions* (Paris, 1657), p. 37; idem., *The spiritual exercises of the most vertuous and religious D. Gertrude More of the holy order of S. Bennet and English congregation of Our Ladies of Comfort in Cambray* (Paris, 1658).

Yet it was *Sancta Sophia* which had the greatest impact and caused the most controversy among Cressy's critics.<sup>688</sup> The preface directly placed the work within the ongoing debates over Cressy's conversion, as he admitted that it was mainly gratitude that had driven him to compose the work, for 'I owe not only the hastning of my Reconciliation to the Catholic Church' to the works of Baker, but also his happiness as a Benedictine.<sup>689</sup> As the second edition of *Exomologesis* had shown, Cressy was more than aware of the uses of mystical theology among radicals in England, and in *Sancta Sophia* he shows a continuing awareness of this by addressing the issue directly. He insisted firstly that Baker's works were 'the very soule of Christianity' and validated by Scripture, tradition and 'sprinkled everywhere in almost all Mystick Writers'. Those within the Catholic Church (especially among the Benedictines) who had been critical of Baker's doctrines were not doing so on account of their contents, but were rather worried they would fall into the hands of 'strangers & Enemies to the Church, especially the frantick Enthusiasts of this age who, as is feared, will conceive their frenzies and disorders justified here'.<sup>690</sup> Because of this Cressy stressed that no 'Mystick Writer' had ever pretended to receive any new 'Lights or Revelations' beyond what was known and taught in the Church, and that the reader should avoid 'the Enthusiasts of these days' along with any 'seduced or seducing spirits' that claimed to be following such doctrines.<sup>691</sup> Nor had they ever asked for 'zealous seditious Reformations, nor the least prejudice done or intended to peace'. Peace, unity and obedience, Cressy asserted, were the products of the mystick authors' writings. They were nothing like the 'frantick spirits of this Age' which were the 'cause and ground of all the miseries and mischeifes of late hapning in our Nation'.<sup>692</sup> He finished by explaining:

Thus stands the case betweene Catholick Inspirations and the pretended Inspirations of Sectaries. Such is that Spirit of Charity and Peace, and so divine are the effects of it directing the minds of good, humble, Obedient & devout Catholicks: And such is

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<sup>688</sup> As would be expected, the work was also incredibly popular among the Benedictines. Caroline Bowden has noted that Cambrai alone had 23 copies of the work; see her 'Building libraries in exile: The English convents and their book collections in the seventeenth century', *British Catholic History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2015), pp. 343-82, p. 378.

<sup>689</sup> Serenus Cressy, *Sancta Sophia Or Directions for the prayer of contemplation &c. Extracted out of more then XL. treatises written by the late Ven. Father F. Augustin Baker, a monke of the English congregation of the Holy Order of S. Benedict: and methodically digested by the R.F. Serenus Cressy, of the same order and congregation. And printed at the charges of his convent of S. Gregories in Doway* (Douai, 1657), sig. a3<sup>r</sup>. Cressy wrote to Richard Baxter and promoted his edition of Baker's works, stating that he had left the Church of England to partake in 'Spiritual contemplation and devotion' of which Baker's work was a prime example; Richard Baxter, *Cain and Abel malignity that is, enmity to serious godliness, that is, to an holy and heavenly state of heart and life : lamented, described, detected, and unananswerably proved to be the devilish nature, and the militia of the devil against God and Christ and the church and kingdoms, and the surest sign of a state of damnation* (London, 1689), p. 134.

<sup>690</sup> Cressy, *Sancta Sophia*, p. v.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xxi.

the spirit of Disorder, Revenge, Wrath, Rebellion, &c., and so dismal are the effects of that Spirit wherewith selfe-opinionated, presumptuous, frantick Sectaries are agitated. What resemblance, what agreement can there be betweene these two? This evill Spirit, though it sacrilegiously usurps the name, yet it doth not so much as counterfeit the operations of the good one.<sup>693</sup>

Cressy believed he had put enough distance between the mystical theology of the Catholic Church and that of the sectaries in England to justify publishing the works of Baker. Yet as we will see, his critics in the Restoration would use this to their advantage, labelling his mysticks as both similar to sectarians and proof that fanaticism had found its way into the so called 'tradition' handed down through revelation.

Cressy ensured Baker's canon of mystick authors was well represented, with over thirty direct references to various 'mysticks' throughout *Sancta Sophia*. The canon formed the backbone of references which legitimated the teachings of Baker. Confirmed by Scripture and by the ancient Fathers, mysticks were referenced in abundance to ensure that the doctrines of Baker were presented as traditional and not innovative. Through this printed edition of Baker's teachings, a wider audience now knew that mysticks included:

*Scala perfectionis*, written by F. Walter Hilton; the *Clowd of Unknowing*, written by an unknowne Authour; the *Secret Paths of Divine Love*; as likewise the *Anatomie of the Soule*, written by R. F. Constantin Barbanson, a Capuchin; the book entitled *Of the Threefold Will of God*, written by R. F. Benet Fitch (alias Canfield), a Capuchin likewise; the works of St. Teresa, of B. John de Cruce: likewise Harphius, Thaulerus, Suso, Rusbrochius, Richardies de St. Victore, Gerson, &c. And of the Ancients, *the Lives of the Ancient Fathers living in the Deserts*, and Cassian his *Conferences* of certaine Ancient Hermites [...] the works of Rodriguez of *Perfection*; the duke of Gandy Of *Good Works*; Mons. de Sales, Ludovicus de Puente, &c. And lastly, books of a mixed nature are Granatenis, Blosius, &c.<sup>694</sup>

References to Benet of Canfield were particularly troublesome in light of popularity of his work among radical sectarians. Reference to Canfield's teachings of 'active and passive annihilation' would not have dissuaded comparisons between it and the perfectionist teachings of Everard. When combined with Cressy's echoing of Baker's statement from *Secretum*, that 'Mystick Writers in expressing the spirituall way in which they have bene lead, doe oft seeme to differ extreamly from one another [...] is merely in the phrase & manner of expression', this would set up the mystick canon to come under attack from those who sought to prove the whole thing was a product of Catholic enthusiasm.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> Ibid., pp. xxv-xxvi.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

## Cressy and the Early Restoration

After 1660 Cressy would find himself having to embrace a new role. Over the course of the Commonwealth considerations towards the toleration of Catholics in England had emerged.<sup>696</sup> No new recusancy laws were passed, and individual Catholics could be included in the 1652 Act of General Pardon, Indemnity and Oblivion. Henry Holden, a secular priest well acquainted with Cressy, proposed that in return for allegiance to the new regime, Catholics should be allowed to establish six to eight bishops based on ancient English sees, but without the revenues.<sup>697</sup> The Blackloists, having circled the exiled court and become well acquainted with Thomas Hobbes, had worked on creating a version of Catholicism in England that they hoped would prove pleasing to the Interregnum regime, which in turn hoped to use this to soothe the foreign powers of France and Spain to prevent them from aiding Irish and Scottish rebellions.<sup>698</sup> John Austin, Thomas White, and Holden, in meetings with Cromwell in the late 1640s and 1650s, promised disarmament, the expulsion of the Jesuits, oaths against the papal supremacy and Parliamentary approval of potential bishops in return for securing toleration.<sup>699</sup> Even the papacy withheld judgement on White's political works, condemning only his theological rejection of papal infallibility, unsure of whether acting against his work pushing for toleration would upset the delicate relationships between Cromwell, France and Spain. After the Restoration, when Rome was sure of the stability of the reign of Charles II, they eventually condemned these works as well, having cautiously waited for the political situation in England to settle.<sup>700</sup> The Blackloists' willingness to obey Cromwell and their Hobbist principles were constantly repeated in anti-Catholic works

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<sup>696</sup> Blair Worden has reminded us that the Cromwellian regime normally discussed liberty of conscience for 'God's peculiars', which normally fell into three groups: Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists. Toleration of Catholics was normally only discussed in political terms and with an eye to foreign policy; Worden, *God's Instruments*, pp. 63-90.

<sup>697</sup> Michael A. Mullet, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland, 1558-1829* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>698</sup> As well as entertaining the possibility of toleration with the Blackloists, the Independents also engaged in secret talks with a group of Irish Catholics led by the mysterious Cistercian abbot Patrick Creilly. For more on Hobbes, the political context of the Blackloist meetings and the Irish situation see Jeffrey R. Collins 'Thomas Hobbes and the Blackloist Conspiracy of 1649', *The Historical Journal* Vol. 45, No. 2 (2002), pp. 305-31.

<sup>699</sup> Two Jesuits, Henry More and George Ward, along with some other clergy had also created an oath to attempt to appease the Independents, see T. H. Clancy, 'The Jesuits and the Independents: 1647', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu*, Vol. 40 (1971), pp. 67-89.

<sup>700</sup> Stefania Tutino, 'The Catholic Church and the English Civil War: The Case of Thomas White', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2007), pp. 232-55, p. 249. See also idem., *Thomas White and the Blackloists: Between Politics and Theology during the English Civil War* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008).



throughout the Restoration, especially when toleration of Catholics was feared to be included in Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1662.<sup>701</sup>

If the Blackloists found no favour with Charles II, then Cressy was decidedly more fortunate in his new role as chaplain to Henrietta Maria at Somerset House. It was here that he ran what Patricia Brückmann has labelled 'the Roman Catholic propaganda machine', engaging in controversy with a number of high ranking Church of England divines, a change of pace for Cressy after his years at Douai and Paris.<sup>702</sup> During his time at Somerset House Cressy has been described as representing the 'public image of the courtly Benedictine' due to his connections to the royal family and leading nobles.<sup>703</sup> Benedictines had found particular favour with Charles due to the actions of John Hudleston, a priest who had sheltered him after his defeat at the hands of Cromwell's New Model Army in 1651. After 1660 Charles remembered this act, inviting Hudleston to live at Somerset House to serve Henrietta Maria and officiate marriages both there and at St James's Palace, becoming chaplain to Catherine of Braganza after Henrietta Maria's death in 1669. Even during the Popish Plot fabricated by Titus Oates and the hysteria that followed, Hudleston was deemed to have earned his freedom and was exempt from the restrictions of any recusancy laws. He rose to infamy due to his presence at the deathbed of Charles in 1685, summoned by the Duke of York, where he heard of the king's desire to 'die in the Faith and Communion of the Holy Roman Catholic Church'.<sup>704</sup> James Maurus Corker, another Benedictine, had converted John Dryden to the Catholic faith and influenced Dryden's defence of James II's first wife, Anne Hyde, after she converted to Catholicism.<sup>705</sup> Perhaps the greatest credit should be given to the Benedictine nuns of Ghent who transmitted news, mail and funds to the exiled king. Their Abbess Mary Knatchbull also gave regular advice to Edward Hyde.<sup>706</sup> Knatchbull had hoped to establish the Benedictines on English soil as a result of assisting the

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<sup>701</sup> Jeffrey Collins, 'Restoration Anti-Catholicism: A Prejudice in Motion', in Charles W.A. Prior and Glenn Burgess (eds.), *England's Wars of Religion, Revisited* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 281-306, p. 292. The efforts of Kenelm Digby and John Winter to secure toleration by stressing the loyalty of English Catholics was attacked by the Cavalier Parliament in 1663 and had already fallen foul of Edward Hyde, who had banished them from the exiled court and revealed details of their negotiations in 1656.

<sup>702</sup> Patricia Brückmann, 'Virgins visited by angel powers: *The Rape of the Lock*, platonick love, sylphs and some mysticks', in George Sebastian Rousseau and Pat Rogers (eds.), *The Enduring Legacy: Alexander Pope Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-20, p. 14.

<sup>703</sup> Lunn, *The English Benedictines*, p. 131. See also David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England, 1649-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

<sup>704</sup> Richard Hudleston, *A Short And Plain Way To The Faith And Church* (London, 1688), p. 36.

<sup>705</sup> Lunn, *The English Benedictines*, p. 133.

<sup>706</sup> For more on Hyde in exile see Philip Major, *Writings of Exile in the English Revolution and Restoration* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), ch. 1.

king in his time of need, and to secure some measure of toleration for Catholics.<sup>707</sup> Cressy was part of a much wider and substantial Benedictine presence in royal circles before and during the Restoration, which goes some way in explaining why his subsequent writings were met with such meticulous scrutiny, as many feared Catholic influence at court. He also played a major role in the plans of Thomas Clifford, Comptroller of the Household and later member of Charles II's Cabal Ministry, to encourage reconciliation with Rome, a plan implemented in the 1670 Treaty of Dover.<sup>708</sup>

Cressy's first bout of controversy in the Restoration began with Thomas Pierce's sermon to Charles II in February 1662. Pierce had been fiercely loyal to the Episcopalian system throughout the Civil Wars and Commonwealth, and was one of its chief apologists alongside Henry Hammond and Peter Heylyn. He had been a key player at the Worcester House conference in 1660, held at the lodgings of Edward Hyde. The outcome of the conference between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, which moved towards a more comprehensive Church system that could accommodate both men like Pierce and Presbyterians like Richard Baxter, would come to nothing after the Cavalier Parliament of 1661. A revised prayer book was completed by the end of 1661, bishops were restored to the House of Lords, and MPs were to take the sacraments as required by the Church of England. This shift, partly caused by the Fifth Monarchist uprisings in the January, only encouraged the legislation known as the 'Clarendon Code' which strictly outlawed and heavily penalized any dissent from the national Church. Pierce was thus central to the 'distinct doctrinal, ecclesiological and spiritual identity' of the Restoration Church which had survived the 1640s and 1650s, and was now preserved among a handful of important bishops who attempted to guide the Church through new turbulent waters after 1660.<sup>709</sup>

In his sermon Pierce defended the origins of the newly revitalized Church, whilst also firing off the usual attacks at Catholicism. In it he warned of men of 'pleasant insinuations' who hid 'very plausible Snares' and would react with venom to his claims that the Church of England was a continuation of the true church of antiquity. Quoting Tertullian in the phrase '*That Religion was the truest, which was the first*', he argued that the Church of Rome had added to this true origin through several erroneous doctrines such as that of Purgatory, which they had taken from Origen, who was 'not onely an *Heretick*, but an

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<sup>707</sup> Claire Walker, 'Prayer, Patronage, and Political Conspiracy: English Nuns and the Restoration', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1-23. Walker details how Charles, his ministers and other members of the royal family visited Ghent, solidifying links between monastic and royal families (p. 11). See also Caroline Bowden, 'The abbess and Mrs Brown: Lady Mary Knatchbull and Royalist Politics in Flanders in the late 1650s', *Recusant History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1999), pp. 288-308.

<sup>708</sup> Gabriel Glickman, 'Christian Reunion, the Anglo-French Alliance and the English Catholic Imagination, 1660-72', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 128, No. 531 (2013), pp. 263-91, p. 264.

<sup>709</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, pp. xiv- xv.

*Haeresiarcha* [i.e. founder of a heresy]'.<sup>710</sup> Others included unmarried priesthood, transubstantiation, and the supremacy of the Pope. The Reformation had been justified because it had attempted to return to this original beginning, which was the standard by which to improve and reform. The Council of Trent had shown the 'Roman Partisans' to be unafraid of making new articles of faith through which the 'Roman Church was made to differ as well from her *ancient* and *purser self*', and thus English reformers had 'made a *Secession*, that they might not partake of the *Romane Schisme*'.<sup>711</sup> Attacking the infallibility of the Roman Church and the supremacy of the Pope was always going to attract the attention of Cressy, who promptly responded.

Cressy's reply, addressed to Henrietta Maria, mocked those who cried 'aloud their fears of the *increase of Popery*' when individuals left the Church of England and converted to Catholicism. He noted the irony in their panic over this, when 'hundreds of all other *Sects* relinquish both their *Churches* and *Allegiance* too'. The sects separated from the Church of England because they did not believe it to be the true Church, just as those who converted to Catholicism had believed. Defenders of the Church of England were going to great pains to present Catholics as a sect, or a 'separated *Schismatical congregation*' that had varied from the true Church of antiquity.<sup>712</sup> Cressy revived older arguments by comparing Pierce to the 'vain brag of *Bishop Jewel*' that the Catholics had invented '*novelties*', and argued that Catholic authors had proven the doctrines of papal supremacy and transubstantiation to be validated. John Jewel had defended the Elizabethan Settlement in his sermon at St. Paul's Cross in 1559 and then in his *Apologia ecclesiae anglicanae* (1562). He had challenged his Catholic opponents to prove the Catholic doctrines he rejected had any basis in Scripture or from the primitive Church during its first six centuries.<sup>713</sup> Archbishop Laud and Henry Hammond had shrunk Jewel's original six hundred year range to four hundred, according to Cressy, because of 'many hot Encounters between the Controvertists' which had proven the Catholic Church valid. He mocked Pierce by wondering if 'such Antiquity pass for Primitive, and Antiquity *Antique enough*' and asked if Pierce would 'shrink up Primitive Antiquity from the 6th Age to the 4th, from the 4th to the 3d [...] Or from the 3d to the 1st Age and the Apostles times'. The Church of England was shrinking its defence in the face of Catholic proofs of legitimacy, according to Cressy, and those that followed in Jewel's

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<sup>710</sup> Thomas Pierce, *The primitive rule of reformation delivered in a sermon before His Majesty at Whitehall, Feb. 1, 1662 in vindication of our Church against the novelties of Rome* (Oxford, 1663), p. 8.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>712</sup> Serenus Cressy, *Roman-Catholick doctrines no novelties, or, An answer to Dr. Pierce's court-sermon, miscall'd The primitive rule of Reformation* (n.p., 1663), unpaginated page in 'The Epistle Dedicatory'.

<sup>713</sup> Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, pp. 30-31; John Jewel, *Apologia ecclesiae anglicanae* (London, 1562).

footsteps were ‘timorous Souls that would fain be thought to deal civilly with antiquity’.<sup>714</sup> By the end of Cressy’s long and detailed reply to Pierce he even attacked the name ‘Protestant’ in England. Lutherans and other Reformed had taken the name ‘in their protests against the Edict of Worms in 1521, but he sees little reason why those in England deserved the name:

Against what Armes or Armies did they ever *protest*? What Edicts were made against them? We *Catholics* might rather assume such a title, if it were of any special honor, having seen (and felt too) Edicts of another and far more bloody nature made against us: Nay (thanks to such *Sermons*) we see at this day Edicts, severe enough, published, and worse preparing [...] though our hope is still in the mercy of our gracious Sovereign, and the prudent moderation of those about him.<sup>715</sup>

It was not just those on the side of the Episcopalians that Cressy engaged with.<sup>716</sup> His other early controversy was with the Independent Edward Bagshaw, who at several stages moved in Fifth Monarchist circles. Bagshaw’s *A Brief Enquiry Into The Grounds And Reasons* (1662) described the foundation of the Catholic Church as ‘nothingness’. The teachings of tradition were ‘all the Basis which doth under-prop this Building’, while infallibility itself was ‘the Bottomlesse Pit, out of which all this Deadly smoke doth issue’.<sup>717</sup>

Transubstantiation, supererogation and iconoclasm were either bold additions to Scripture or gross falsifications of it. Drawing on earlier critics of infallibility, he argued that Chillingworth and Falkland had proven the divine authority of the Scriptures over the perpetual and continuous authority of man.<sup>718</sup> Cressy’s reply tarnished Bagshaw as wanting to return to the days of the Civil Wars by scaremongering about Catholicism in an attempt to provoke a reaction among his readers.<sup>719</sup> In biting passages, Cressy asked why Bagshaw referred to himself as Protestant or Reformed, when he was not part of the Church of England. He should, Cressy insisted, count himself lucky that Charles II was tolerant of those outside the national Church.<sup>720</sup> Not only was Cressy’s reply proof of his dedication to defending Catholicism against any critic, it was also revealing of Cressy’s skills in character assassination.

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<sup>714</sup> Cressy, *Roman-Catholick doctrines no novelties*, pp. 309-11.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321. Cressy would also gain a reply from Daniel Whitby, *Romish doctrines not from the beginning, or, A reply to what S.C. (or Serenus Cressy) a Roman Catholick hath returned to Dr. Pierces sermon preached before His Majesty at Whitehall, Feb. 1 1662 in vindication of our church against the novelties of Rome* (London, 1664).

<sup>716</sup> Another critic of his *Exomologesis* on the grounds of its defence of infallibility was Matthew Poole, *The Nullity Of The Romish Faith, Or, A Blow At The Root Of The Romish Church* (Oxford, 1666).

<sup>717</sup> Edward Bagshaw, *A brief enquiry into the grounds and reasons, whereupon the infallibility of the Pope and the Church of Rome is said to be founded* (London, 1662), sigs. A3<sup>r</sup>- A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>719</sup> Serenus Cressy, *A non est inventus return'd to Mr. Edward Bagshaw's Enquiry* (n.p., 1662), p. 2.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

### Stillingfleet, Cressy and 'Rational' Religion

Edward Stillingfleet would prove to be Cressy's greatest nemesis in the Restoration period as well as the greatest critic of mystical theology.<sup>721</sup> Stillingfleet had risen to prominence in the early 1660s as one of the Church of England's chief apologists. His *Irenicum* (1660) negotiated a truce between the Episcopal and Presbyterian systems of Church government by arguing for a more comprehensive Church system which would end the twenty year 'noise of these Axes and Hammers so much about the Temple'.<sup>722</sup> In his *A rational account of the grounds of Protestant religion* (1665) he argued against those Catholics who had questioned where the Protestant Church of England had been before Luther, or indeed where it had been in the Interregnum. He answered by arguing that the Church had suffered an eclipse in the past two decades, similar to that of the much longer eclipse suffered before the Reformation. The Church had 'gradually regained her light' by a union of the Church and the king. In overtly Erastian tones, Stillingfleet maintained that 'as these two remain unshaken, we need not fear the continuance and flourishing of the *Reformed Church of England*'. Whereas this union brought loyalty and strength among the English, the Roman Church had debauched Christianity with error and superstition.<sup>723</sup> He presented the Church of England as rational and unified in sound doctrines, while '*Popery* begins to grow weary of it self' trying to enforce doctrines which even 'moderate and rational men of their own side disown'. He referenced the ongoing struggles with Jansenists in France and the Blackloist group in England as proof of such infighting.<sup>724</sup>

Stillingfleet argued that as well as Scripture and antiquity, they also had reason on their side. Catholicism, with its superstition, was antagonistic to reason, which could be found in every man's heart. Religion itself was now defined more in terms of reason than faith; Catholics had equal claim to faith, but reason was argued as unique to the Church of England. The internal 'judgement of the sense' used by each man when reading Scripture, something inherited from Chillingworth, was a means to certainty which was independent of papal infallibility and tradition. Reason was thus a greater authority than papal infallibility in regards to issues of Scripture.<sup>725</sup> Stillingfleet was typical of a generation of clergy which had

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<sup>721</sup> Both men would also disagree over their respective histories of religion in England. See Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, ch. 3; Cressy, *The Church-History of Brittany*; Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Britannicae, or, The antiquities of the British churches* (London, 1685).

<sup>722</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *Irenicum. A weapon-salve for the Churches wounds* (London, 1660), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>723</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *A rational account of the grounds of Protestant religion* (London, 1665), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>725</sup> Raymond D. Tumbleson, *Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 98-100.

been educated against a backdrop of political unrest and sectarian enthusiasm, and thus appealed to reason and prudence to avoid the chances of any further scriptural dogma.<sup>726</sup>

Stillingfleet's claims that the Catholic Church was irrational garnered criticism from John Sergeant, a Catholic controversialist, who insisted on the validity of tradition as well as Scripture as the certain grounds of faith. His *Sure-footing in Christianity* (1665) argued for such, and found a great critic in Meric Casaubon.<sup>727</sup> In the third appendix of *Sure-Footing*, Sergeant attacked Stillingfleet's critique of the infallibility of tradition. This in turn would provoke a response from John Tillotson, who by this time was a popular preacher in London. His *The Rule of Faith* (1666) contained both his and Stillingfleet's replies to Sergeant, which again argued for the primacy of Scripture and the errors of Catholic oral and written traditions.<sup>728</sup> Sergeant's next book, the ironically named *A Letter of Thanks* (1666), was condemned by Tillotson as 'jargon', taunting that 'neither Harphius nor Rusbroschius, nor the profound Mother Julian, have any thing in their Writings more senseless and obscure than this Discourse'. Tillotson thought that Sergeant wrote in so unintelligible a way that he 'seems to be as well made for a Mystical Divine' and that if his superiors had any sense they would employ him to write about 'the method of self-annihilation, and the passive unions of nothing with nothing' for he seemed suited to writing 'as Mystical a Discourse as a man would wish'.<sup>729</sup> The mentioning of mysticks and Julian of Norwich in particular is our entry point for the contributions of Cressy and Abraham Woodhead in this debate, for both their writings reveal why Tillotson knew so much about mystical theology in 1671.<sup>730</sup>

Woodhead was the first of the two to strike back at Stillingfleet. He had been elected proctor of Oxford, defending the university before the Long Parliament in 1642. In his subsequent travels abroad he had been exposed to those bulwarks of the Counter-

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<sup>726</sup> Jonathan Bruce Parkin, *Science, Religion, and Politics in Restoration England: Richard Cumberland's De Legibus Naturae* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), p. 18.

<sup>727</sup> John Sergeant, *Sure-Footing In Christianity, Or Rational Discourses On The Rule Of Faith With Short Animadversions On Dr. Pierce's Sermon : Also On Some Passages In Mr. Whitby And M. Stillingfleet, Which Concern That Rule* (London: 1665); Meric Casaubon, *To J.S., the author of Sure-footing, his letter, lately published, The Answer Of Mer. Casaubon, D.D., Concerning The New Way Of Infallibility Lately Devised To Uphold The Roman Cause, The Holy Scriptures, Antient Fathers And Councillis Laid Aside* (London, 1665).

<sup>728</sup> John Tillotson, *The Rule Of Faith, Or, An Answer To The Treatise Of Mr. J.S. Entitled, Sure-Footing, &C.* (London, 1666). For more on the association of Catholicism with oral tradition, see Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>729</sup> John Tillotson, *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), sigs. C1<sup>v</sup>-C2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>730</sup> The most recent attempt to frame this publication of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations* has completely ignored this wider debate about tradition and the role of revelation, and only briefly acknowledges the role of Abraham Woodhead; Jennifer Summit, 'From Anchorhold To Closet: Julian Of Norwich In 1670 And The Immanence Of The Past', in Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker (eds.), *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 29-48.

Reformation, Teresa of Avila and Francis de Sales, and began to doubt his Protestant faith. In 1647 he had the Duke of Buckingham and his brother Lord Francis Villiers as pupils and returned to England with them. He developed a strong interest in the life and work of Philip Neri and eventually settled in a house at Hoxton, near London; the same house where the 1605 Gunpowder plot had been discovered.<sup>731</sup> There he would spend some thirty years forming a community of scholars who devoted themselves to praying and writing, while publishing numerous works including editions of Teresa of Avila, a life of Philip Neri and the *Rule* of Neri's community.<sup>732</sup> Given his coordinated attacks with Cressy in the 1670s, it is likely that Cressy had more of a connection with Woodhead than history has recorded. Woodhead's *The Guide in Controversies* (1667) aimed attacks at one of Cressy's old enemies, William Chillingworth, while also addressing Stillingfleet. He repeated old arguments that 'amidst the distractions of so many Sects and Opinions' the Catholic Church was a sure way to salvation. The Church had a multitude of benefits towards salvation, including confession and holy communion, rules of life for the overcoming of sin and mastery of the will, as well as 'her excellent directions in *mystical Theology*, and the practice of *mental* and *vocal Prayer* for attaining Recollection, and a closer union with God'.<sup>733</sup>

In the time between Woodhead's attack and Stillingfleet's next work, *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome* (1671), two important works were published. The first is a curious tract entitled *A rational discourse concerning prayer: its nature and kinds. Chiefly of Mystick Contemplation, the most perfection Action of Christian Life* (1669). The work was labelled as a translation, although no author or country of origin is ever mentioned to give any clue towards the true author of the text. The work appeared at a most opportune time for Woodhead and Cressy however, and this should not be forgotten when trying to place its origin. Given Woodhead's newly revealed fondness for mystical theology in 1667, in a work attacking Stillingfleet's claims that the Church of England was more 'rational', it should seem almost too timely that a work defending the rationality of mystical theology appeared soon after. Another staunch supporter of the Church of England who desired a more comprehensive Church, Thomas Barlow, seemed suitably confused about the authorship in his copy of the work held at the Bodleian library. Whoever the

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<sup>731</sup> For more on Woodhead's writings see M. Slusser, 'Abraham Woodhead (1608- 78): Some Research Notes, Chiefly About His Writings', *Recusant History*, Vol. 15 (1979), pp. 406-22; A.B. Gardiner, 'Abraham Woodhead, "The Invisible Man": His Impact on Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther*', *Recusant History*, Vol. 26 (2003), pp. 570-88.

<sup>732</sup> Jerome Bertram, 'Woodhead, Abraham (1609–1678)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29923>, accessed 7 May 2015].

<sup>733</sup> Abraham Woodhead, *The guide in controversies, or, A rational account of the doctrine of Roman-Catholics concerning the ecclesiastical guide in controversies of religion reflecting on the later writings of Protestants, particularly of Archbishop Lawd and Dr. Stillingfleet on this subject* (London, 1667), p. 288.

author was, Barlow claimed in the inside cover of his copy, had ‘drunke the dregs of Popery’ and was superstitious, ridiculous and impious.<sup>734</sup> The work itself set out the nature of mystical theology and of ‘Some, who call themselves not onely Divines but Mysticks’ who believed that the essence of the soul could be united with divine nature, passing beyond the will, and inheriting the very essence of God.<sup>735</sup> The author went to great pains to show that mystical theology was part of scholastic theology, which separated it from the claims to inspiration from the Holy Spirit that heretics used. Because it was part of scholastic theology, it was subject to the advice and teachings of Scripture, the Church Fathers, and tradition. Believing mystical theology was above Church teachings was the ‘Mother of Rebellion against the Church’.<sup>736</sup> Ancient authors had used mystical theology as a way of knowing, a science, rather than the new way it was used to mean ‘a way of living’, and this was apparently the source of the confusion. Mystical theology was the highest way of knowing, above the metaphysical and the scholastic, a science ‘by which we are taught that we truly know or understand nothing of God, or of the Divine Nature, as it is in it self’.<sup>737</sup> The work was defensive of mysticks and argued that although their expressions seemed to contain contradictions, in most ways their writing was ‘clear and perspicuous’.<sup>738</sup> The author insisted that:

What hitherto we have said, aims onely at this, to shew that those things the Mysticks speak high of their Theology are not fictitious. For they are, at least as to the words, taken out of the Great Dionysius: but, whether the borrowers have understood them in the sense by me explicated, I neither know nor enquire. But, that this is the meaning of the Areopagite, I am perfectly satisfy’d.<sup>739</sup>

This placing of mystical theology within the controls of Catholic tradition, as well as showing it to be justified in Scripture, echoed Cressy’s earlier defences of it in *Sancta Sophia*. Similarly the insistence that all mysticks wrote about the same experience despite differences in language and phrases was also a favourite defence used by Cressy (mimicking Baker). Maintaining that mystical theology was a form of science, a way of knowing, and justifying it as a rational exercise pre-empted Stillingfleet’s later attacks. The fact that Thomas Barlow also had a copy of a later work by Cressy, which he annotated with equally venomous criticism of mystical theology, suggests that contemporaries saw the two works as

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<sup>734</sup> He does not withhold criticism in comments written in the margins of the main text. He declares those who believed they felt Christ’s heartbeat had ‘Diabolicall illusions’ (p. 99) and ‘phantasticall illusions’ (p. 100). Another copy given to the Bodleian in 1913 has a simple note from its donator on the front cover which, equally confused about the authorship, reads ‘Is this a translation of a Spanish book?’

<sup>735</sup> Anon., *A rational discourse concerning prayer: its nature and kinds. Chiefly of mystick contemplation, the most perfect action of Christian life. A translation.* (n.p., 1669), p. 16.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid., p. 33.



directly related in some way.<sup>740</sup> Woodhead's *The Guide In Controversies* and the anonymous 'translation' were joined by a third and final work by Cressy which proved to be the most provocative; the *XVI Revelations of Divine Love* of Julian of Norwich.<sup>741</sup> Dedicated to Lady Mary Blount as thanks for the 'unmerited kindness and friendship' she had shown him, the work was written so that her family could enjoy Julian's 'Saint-like Conversion'.<sup>742</sup> One of its most influential readers was Catherine of Braganza, whose finely bound version is held at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. These three works together provided Stillingfleet with enough material for his explosive attack published in 1671.

### **Mystical Theology and Roman Fanaticism**

Stillingfleet renewed his attack on idolatry in his *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry* (1671). His main attack on mystical theology came in a section entitled 'Of the Fanaticism of the Roman Church'. He sought to use the authors he saw as mysticks against the Catholic Church, showing that their teachings had been accepted and used to form points of doctrine, partly caused by the Catholic reverence for monasticism which was seen as having the special admiration of the papacy. This was an attempt to use one of the greatest positive attributes of the Church as argued by Catholics like Woodhead and Cressy against them by showing mysticks to be nothing but enthusiasts. If these mysticks had gained authority in the Roman Church, Stillingfleet argued, then surely that showed the dangers and falsities of relying on tradition over Scripture.

Reversing the argument that the Catholic Church was protection against schism and sectarianism, Stillingfleet argued that no Church had suffered from more enthusiasts, whose mysticks which were supposedly 'decryed and opposed by all the members of the *Church of England*', and that the highest strain of Catholic devotion, the desire for a perfect way of life was 'meer *Enthusiasm*'.<sup>743</sup> He harnessed the examples of female saints over the issue of the innocence of the Virgin Mary, for Gertrude the Great and Bridget of Sweden had visions showing her immaculate conception, rendering her free from sin. The revelations of these authors were accepted into Church teachings, and those that opposed it were deemed heretics. Yet Catherine of Siena had visions of Mary being conceived in original sin. 'Here we have Saint against Saint, Revelation against Revelation, *S. Catharine* against *S. Brigitt*'

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<sup>740</sup> Barlow owned a copy of Cressy's *Fanaticism Fanatically imputed to the Catholick Church* (n.p., 1672).

<sup>741</sup> Cressy had published Walter Hilton's *The Scale (Or Ladder) Of Perfection* (London, 1659) with little to none of the reaction Julian received. This suggests something of the association of melancholy and enthusiasm with women in the period, see chapter 3 above.

<sup>742</sup> Julian of Norwich, *XVI revelations of divine love* (n.p., 1670), sigs. A2<sup>r</sup>-A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>743</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *A Discourse Concerning The Idolatry Practised In The Church Of Rome* (London, 1671), p. 241.

Stillingfleet pointed out. This showed the unreliability of these sources for Church teachings, both women being examples of the ‘power of imagination, or a Religious Melancholy’.<sup>744</sup> Catherine of Siena’s ability to ‘smell souls’ was ‘A degree of *Enthusiasme* above the *Spirit of discerning any Quakers among us*’, yet her teachings continued to be approved and allowed within the Catholic Church. The same went for Angela of Foligno, Gertrude the Great, Hildegard of Bingen, and Elisabeth of Schönau, all of whom were ‘contradictory to each other in those things whereon the proof of a point of doctrine depends’.<sup>745</sup> If these women were to be taken as part of the ‘unwritten traditions’ of the Catholic Church, having gained knowledge through revelation which then influenced doctrine, then their inherent contradictions on certain points of faith were enough to show the falsities of the entire concept and the clarity and usefulness of relying on Scripture alone.

Stillingfleet was galled by the fact Catholics made so much of the fanaticism in England as proof of the illegitimacy of the national Church, when he believed their very doctrines were based on the writings of fanatics. ‘Where are the Visions and Revelations ever pleaded by us in any matter of *Doctrine?*’ he asked, ‘Do we resolve the grounds of any doctrine of ours into any Visions and Extasies?’<sup>746</sup> It is here that he associates Cressy with this trend. ‘Have we any mother Juliana’s among us?’ he taunted, ‘do we publish to the world the *Fanatic Revelations of distempered brains* as Mr. Cressy hath very lately done?’<sup>747</sup> Cressy had provided Stillingfleet with proof of his claims at the most opportune moment. Catholics had restricted the reading of Scripture in the vernacular, yet happily encouraged reading the accounts of fanatics and enthusiasts. In an unusual retort, Stillingfleet asked if Hendrick Niclaes or Jacob Boehme, the ‘highest Enthusiasts’, had ever talked with more extravagance than Julian of Norwich. Even those fanatics of Protestant leanings were preferable to those of the Catholics. It is an unusual defence and one that Stillingfleet touches on very briefly, but it seems that in his eagerness to attack Catholicism, he was willing to defend even the worst the Protestant religion had produced as the lesser of two evils. What followed was an exercise in precision as Stillingfleet dissected the writings of Julian, outlining her ‘Canting and Enthusiastick expressions’. All her book had done was convince the English of the truth that any fanatic or enthusiast among them paled in comparison to those of the Catholic faith. The religious orders had been set up in a similar way on the accounts of visions and revelations of enthusiasts. Benedict of Nursia, Bruno of Cologne, Dominic of Osma, Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola had all gained authority within the Catholic Church through pretended ‘*inspiration of the Holy Ghost*’ and

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

were guilty of fanaticism. He took particular delight in attacking Benedict, who had claimed to know the '*secrets of the Divinity, being one Spirit with God*' among other things, all of which 'are enough for St. *Benedicts Enthusiasme*'.<sup>748</sup> After working his way through the other religious orders with systematic fury, Stillingfleet claimed that it would be impossible that any '*Fanaticks be produced among us (though we are far from looking on them as the supporters of our Church) who have exceed S. Francis in their actions or expressions*'.<sup>749</sup>

Criticism of religious women and the monastic orders proved to be a warm up for Stillingfleet's main attack, which was aimed at mystical theology directly. He argued how:

We are to take notice that those of the *Church of Rome*, who have set themselves to the Writing Books of Devotion, have with great zeal recommended so mystical and unintelligible a way of devotion, as though their design had been only to amuse and confound the minds of devout persons, and to prepare them for the most gross *Enthusiasme* and extravagant illusions of Fancy. But this is the fruit of leaving the *Scriptures* and that most plain and certain way of *Religion* delivered therein; there can be no end of Phantastical modes of devotion, and every superstitious *Fanatick* will be still inventing more, or reviving old ones.<sup>750</sup>

By restricting access to Scripture, the Roman Church had to provide for both the superstitious and enthusiastic tempers of Catholics. For the superstitious they provided tedious and ceremonial external devotions that were 'as dull and as cold as the earth it self', while for the enthusiastic they provided works of mystical theology. This was a life of introversion that ended in 'Enthusiasme or madness', the perfection of which was the individual believing they had annihilated their being and deified their soul. The best example of such an enthusiast was Cressy, who after 'many turnings and changes of opinions sits down at last' as a 'Popish Fanatick' and was harder to understand than the 'Quakers Canting'.<sup>751</sup> That Cressy echoed Baker's insistence that the Cambrai nuns were 'unlearned' and thus more suitable for the task did not go unnoticed by Stillingfleet, who had already made a case for the enthusiasm of religious women throughout history. After a substantial block quote from Cressy, Stillingfleet revealed his scepticism at Cressy's attempt to separate the mystical theology of the Benedictines from that of sectarians. Baker had taught '*the highest Enthusiasme*' and Cressy was cunning in trying to distinguish between the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the pretend inspiration of the sectarians, but such an argument did not wash with Stillingfleet. *Sancta Sophia* was 'as great as ever any *Fanatick Sectary* pretended to' for both wanted man to attend to the 'immediate impulses of the *Spirit of God* within them'. The only difference between these two versions of 'the *mystical way*' was that Cressy

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<sup>748</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

had changed a few terms and 'asserted the thing it self higher than our *Enthusiasts* did, who did not boast of so many *raptures, visions, and revelations* as those of the *Church of Rome* have done'.<sup>752</sup>

Needless to say this proved to be a monumental headache to Cressy and Woodhead. Woodhead replied in 1671, and then again in 1672 when both his and Cressy's replies were published together.<sup>753</sup> Woodhead insisted that mystical theology had justification in Scripture, while all those who practiced it submitted to the judgement of their superiors, showing a difference between them and the sectarians of England. By attacking such a respected practice Stillingfleet had 'fitted his Book for the sport and recreation of the Atheist and Debauched'. He repeated claims that 'the only certain way not to be misled' in faith was to submit to the authority of the Catholic Church. He charged Stillingfleet with Socinianism and accused those like him of allowing too much freedom within the Church of England in regards to not believing all the articles of faith, which had justified the rebellion of the sects. 'What fault can it be to forsake the Doctrine of a Church' he asked, 'whose Teaching none is bound to believe or obey out of conscience?' The Church of England was built on 'trembling Quicksand' which would never guarantee the individual Christian proof of salvation, and thus the only safe way was that of the Catholic Church.<sup>754</sup>

In *The Roman-church's devotions vindicated* (1672) Woodhead aligned himself with Cressy in his defence of mystical theology. Mysticks were necessary for advancing the Christian way of perfection, as shown through *Sancta Sophia*, he argued, which had been taught by Pseudo-Dionysius 'and so since him the Mysticks'.<sup>755</sup> His main concern was defending Cressy's *Sancta Sophia*, and a detailed breakdown of the contents concerning the mysticks' teachings on self-annihilation, deification and union with God all show Woodhead's familiarity with the work. Cressy's *Fanaticism fanatically imputed* (1672) continued this argument, insisting that '*Mystick Divines*' had expressed '*the most pure operations of the soule herself, and likewise of God upon the soule in Contemplative Prayer*'. In the mocking tone so often employed, Cressy assumed the persona of Stillingfleet when he taunted that '*even I the most learned, and all comprehending Doctour Stillingfleet doe not understand the language of such Mysticks, therefore it is unintelligible Canting*'.<sup>756</sup> According to Cressy, Stillingfleet was lashing out at what he could not understand out of

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<sup>752</sup> Ibid., pp. 338-40.

<sup>753</sup> Serenus Cressy, *A collection of several treatises in answer to Dr. Stillingfleet* (Paris, 1672).

<sup>754</sup> Abraham Woodhead, *Dr. Stillingfleets principles giving an account of the faith of Protestants, considered by N.O.* (Paris, 1671), sigs. aiiij<sup>r</sup>- aiiij<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>755</sup> Abraham Woodhead, *The Roman-church's devotions vindicated from Doctour Stillingfleet's misrepresentation by O.N. a Catholick.* (n.p., 1672), p. 73.

<sup>756</sup> Cressy, *Fanaticism fanatically imputed*, p. 41.

pure pride and vanity. In an attempt to undermine him, Cressy argued that one of the greatest men who ‘in a wonderfull *Extasy* [...] found himself present in *Paradise*’ beyond all expression was Paul the Apostle, whom Stillingfleet would now surely have to label as ‘the *father of all Fanaticks*’ if his argument was true.<sup>757</sup> Mysticks, great persons of sanctity and learning, had simply endeavoured to describe unions within their souls that were similar to that experienced by Paul. Stillingfleet had selectively chosen the words of some mysticks from *Sancta Sophia* and made them seem like nonsense by deliberately hiding their true sense, heaping these words and phrases together as ‘*Unintelligible Canting*’ while leaving out Cressy’s interpretation that made them intelligible.<sup>758</sup> Such a remark would be echoed by Thomas Godden, another Catholic with close connections to Somerset House and the royal court, who argued that ‘*neither Harphius nor Rusbrochius, nor the profound Mother Juliana have any thing in their writings so seemingly un intelligible, and contradictory, as this discourse of the Doctor's is really such*’, turning Tillotson’s earlier insult about Sergeant back at Stillingfleet.<sup>759</sup>

On the subject of the difference between mysticks and sectarians, Cressy struck a blow at Stillingfleet’s activities during the Interregnum. In the time of the ‘*late Usurper*’ Oliver Cromwell he had been a great preacher, and was surrounded by those who:

Were pretended to come from a *Divine light* and *Inspiration* all warranted by the *Bible*, which *Light* (more, it seems, to the *Doctours* mind) directed them to nothing but doing, viz: to reform *Religion*, to rebell against their *King*, to pluck down *Hierarchy*, to multiply *Sects*, to usurp the office of *Preaching* without any *Vocation*, to imprison, Pillage, kill their fellow subiects and the like: But no such effects proceed from the lights and *Inspirations* of *Internall livers* among *Catholicks* [...] unles *God* by their lawfull *Superiours*, calls them to externall *Employments*, which when he does, he enables them to perform them with greater *Perfection*, as we see by the *Conversion* of many *Nations* performed by such as had spent a great part of their lives in *Solitude* and *Contemplation*.<sup>760</sup>

Surely Stillingfleet should have preferred the Catholic mysticks who did not disrupt the peace unless absolutely necessary, to the chaos caused by the radicals? Unless, as Cressy suggested, Stillingfleet had made a career out of siding with such sectarians. Echoing his opinions from *Exomologesis*, he argued that Luther, Calvin and Tindall had rejected the peaceful faith found in the mystical theology of the Catholic Church and thus ‘procured warre and bloodshed, destruction of Kingdoms, rebellions of Subjects, tearing asunder Gods Church and sacrilegiously invading its revenues’. If Stillingfleet himself listened to the

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<sup>757</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>759</sup> Thomas Godden, *Catholicks no idolaters, or, A full refutation of Doctor Stillingfleet's unjust charge of idolatry against the Church of Rome* (London, 1672), p. 241.

<sup>760</sup> Cressy, *Fanaticism fanaticallly imputed*, p. 51.

divine inspiration found in such theology, 'he would never have published such a *Book*, in which pretending to demonstrate that *Salvation* can scarce possibly be attained in the *Catholick Church*'.<sup>761</sup> Stillingfleet replied in equally mocking tones, clearing himself of the charges, but also taunting the 'Serene Mr. Cressy' (an obvious pun on his religious name). Cressy had been poisoned by mystical theology, a 'Chymical way of devotion'. If mystical theology was to be the measure of Christian piety and certainty of doctrine, Stillingfleet would rather have been an atheist, for 'the Roman Church have made more *Atheists* in *Christendom*, than any one cause whatsoever besides'.<sup>762</sup>

The final work produced in this controversy was perhaps the most hurtful to Cressy as it came from his old associate Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. This was a personal attack on Cressy's character, with several barbed comments addressing the pride and bitterness with which Cressy wrote, with personal jibes about how Cressy 'treated his own Mother with so little respect' that Hyde did not expect him to respect Stillingfleet. In a strident defence of Stillingfleet in which he attempted to identify exactly what had outraged Cressy so much, Hyde assumed it must be his desperation to vindicate the Benedictines. He noted that Cressy had an 'extraordinary zeal on the behalf of so prodigious a number of Saints and Miracles' unlike other Catholic writers who had tried to defend their Church.<sup>763</sup> Yet Hyde believed mysticks were 'melancholick and fanciful men' who did not really understand what they were saying as they could not communicate it in a compressible way.<sup>764</sup> Hyde understood that *Sancta Sophia* was based on the works of a 'Mr. Baker' who was 'generally esteemed a learned and devout man', yet neither Hyde nor Cressy had ever met him, and Hyde found in *Sancta Sophia* 'what was not very vulgarly said, which was honest, was very obscure and difficult to be understood'.<sup>765</sup> Interestingly he compared it to the writings of Henry Vane the younger, who had 'published a book of the same subject' (*The Retired Mans Meditations*, 1655) which had nothing of Vane's usual clear style, but rather one very close to that of Cressy.<sup>766</sup> This again associated the Benedictines' works with the publications of mystical theology that had circulated in England among antinomians, something Cressy had been at pains to avoid.

Hyde also addressed Cressy's complaint that the Church of England had no directors for those wishing for a solitary spiritual life by asking him to remember his time in the Great

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<sup>761</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>762</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *An Answer To Several Late Treatises* (London, 1673), sig. a2<sup>r</sup>, p. 9.

<sup>763</sup> Edward Hyde, *Animadversions Upon A Book Intituled, Fanaticism Fanatically Imputed To The Catholick Church, By Dr. Stillingfleet* (London, 1673), p. 27.

<sup>764</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>765</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

Tew circle. Those ‘*men and women*, with whom, and in whose conversation he had the honour and the happiness to spend many years’ could easily have helped him lead a life more useful to God, his country and himself. Had he asked Hyde, he would have referred Cressy to the devout sermons preached in the Church of England. If he had still wanted more he would have referred him to the life of Teresa of Avila, which ‘abounds in those *visions* he admires, and that *mystical Theology* he delights in’, as well as the works of Baker, if someone else had compiled *Sancta Sophia* instead. He ended here, not wishing to supply Cressy’s ‘Catalogue with the names of many more of the same kind’, as ‘we have *not many* to boast of, and very *good Catholicks* think they boast of *too many*’.<sup>767</sup> This begrudging admittance that Catholics had more works on this subject was part of Hyde’s affection for the Benedictines more generally. He had esteem for the Benedictine monks of the English Congregation, most of whom were ‘all *Gentlemen*, and of very *good Families* (as Mr. Cressy is) and of very civil and quiet natures, not petulant and troublesome’. Hyde explained that they had helped serve Charles II in his exile, giving him money and services more ‘than all the other *Religious Communities* put together’.<sup>768</sup> Moreover, he had heard of no other Benedictine, apart from Cressy, who had engaged in writing controversies with the Church of England, and believed him to be the exception rather than the rule.<sup>769</sup> Despite all this, he believed Cressy had taken up Catholicism and mystical theology when he had become ‘*melancholick*, and *irresolution in his nature*’ which had ‘prevailed with him to bid farewell to his own reason and understanding’.<sup>770</sup>

The debate ended with Cressy’s *An Epistle Apologetical* (1674) in which he would with more warmth attempt to rekindle the links between Hyde and himself that had existed for almost fifty years. He apologised for his tone in previous works, stating that Stillingfleet’s defamation of the Catholic Church had produced a zeal within him to vindicate it. He concluded by asking:

That you would be pleased to depose one Opinion which you seem to have entertained, which is, That, *because Catholicks have been taught from the beginning, That Salvation is only to be had in the true Catholick Church, therefore they cannot have a Cordial Friendship to those who are not in the same Communion*: On the contrary, I do confidently assure you, That though there be one special sort of *Alliance*, called by the Apostle *Philadelphia, a love of Brethren*, peculiar to good *Catholicks* among themselves: yet true *Christian Charity*, the Noblest kind of Friendship, ought to be extended to all, which Charity is likewise warmed, with a Zealous Tenderness of *Compassion*, towards Virtuous *Protestants*, our particular Friends, considering the present danger we suppose them to be in; and

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<sup>767</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96.

<sup>768</sup> This is likely a reference to the activities of the Benedictine nuns of Ghent outlined earlier in this chapter.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

such Compassion impells us, if we have any Piety, to frequent and servent *Prayers* for their Eternal Happiness.<sup>771</sup>

It is tempting to link Cressy's plea for a specifically phrased 'Philadelphian' friendship between those of different religions and the promotion of 'true Christian Charity' with the rise of the Philadelphian Society at the end of the seventeenth century. The Philadelphians were certainly aware of Baker, Cressy, *Sancta Sophia*, the radical uses of mystical theology, and the whole canon of mysticks. But regardless of this, his final work ended on a comforting note of reconciliation with an old friend, written in the final months of Cressy's life. Composed from his cell in Sussex and dated 21<sup>st</sup> March 1674, Cressy ended on a note of humility as he thanked Hyde for having 'honoured so worthless a Creature with the *Title of Friend*'.<sup>772</sup>

The deaths of Cressy and Hyde in 1674 largely ended the debate on mystical theology in Restoration polemic. Stillingfleet would continue his anti-Catholic rhetoric well into the 1680s, arguing for a comprehensive English Church to form a united Protestant front in the wake of the Popish Plot and the prospect of the accession of the Catholic James II to the throne. In this we can see the continuing construction of Catholicism as an 'anti-religion' of the unknown, seditious and dangerous 'other'.<sup>773</sup> The Benedictines continued to develop close links to James II, and both he and Mary of Modena had close links to the nuns at Ghent.<sup>774</sup> Yet the arrival of William III and the expulsion of James II would end the prospect of any likely toleration of Catholics in England for the foreseeable future, while James II would continue on unabated in his religious beliefs at the exiled court of Saint-Germain-En-Laye, surrounded by chaplains from various religious orders.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>771</sup> Serenus Cressy, *An Epistle Apologetical Of S.C. To A Person Of Honour Touching His Vindication Of Dr. Stillingfleet* (London, 1674), pp. 136-37.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>773</sup> Lake, 'Anti-popery'; Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England*, ch. 6; Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688*, chs. 8-14.

<sup>774</sup> Walker, 'Prayer, Patronage, And Political Conspiracy', pp. 18-19; *idem.*, "'When God shall Restore them to their Kingdoms": Nuns, Exiled Stuarts and English Catholic Identity, 1688-1745', in Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (eds.), *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660 – 1760* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 79- 98. See also Geoffrey Scott, *Sacredness of Majesty: The English Benedictines and the Cult of King James II*, Royal Stuart Papers XXIII (Huntingdon: Royal Stuart Society, 1984).

<sup>775</sup> Edward Corp with Edward Gregg, Howard Erskine-Hill and Geoffrey Scott, *A Court in Exile: The Stuarts in France, 1689-1718* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Edward Corp, 'The Jacobite Chapel Royal at Saint-Germain-En-Laye', *Recusant History* Vol. 23 (1997), pp. 528-42; G. Holt, 'Some Chaplains at the Stuart Court, Saint-Germain-en-Laye', *Recusant History*, Vol. 25 (2000), pp. 43-51.



## Conclusion

When taken out of its immediate Benedictine context, we see that Baker's teachings, alongside the canon of mysticks, played a role in larger debates in the mid-to-late seventeenth century. Among the Benedictines there was a concerted effort to ensure that printed works of mystical theology reached only their intended audience, and that they tried to avoid becoming associated with radical sectarians at all costs. Benet of Canfield's *Rule of Perfection* had ended up unintentionally becoming a cornerstone of doctrine among antinomians, and such a fate could not be allowed to befall another Capuchin, John Evangelist, or indeed *Sancta Sophia*. When the Benedictines found themselves in favour with Charles II and in a very visible role at the royal palaces, it was inevitable that their activities and publications should come under intense scrutiny. To those defending the Church of England, mystical theology proved to be useful in arguing against infallibility and unwritten tradition, two mainstays of Tridentine Catholicism. Not only could Catholic mysticks and sectarians be combined into a larger threat to the Church of England, but both proved useful to the growing defence of the Church of England as the bastion of 'rational' religion. Mysticks and radicals both went beyond the plain and clear meaning of Scripture and had caused untold troubles in England and abroad. Mysticks also proved useful in attacking the concept of unwritten tradition, arguing many of them had visions and experiences which directly contradicted each other, showing them to be useless to forming doctrines which provided strength and stability. The Church of England had avoided false doctrines passed down through supposed revelation, relying only on Scripture and the Fathers. They did not limit the individual's access to Scripture in the vernacular, because the indwelling rationality of men, combined with the teachings of the Church of England which echoed antiquity, formed the true way to salvation. Mysticks and mystical theology thus played a visible role in the construction of this identity, and were caught up in debates between Catholic apologists, defenders of the Church of England, and critics of the radical sectarianism of the Civil Wars.

In the final chapter concerning the rise and fall of the Philadelphian Society we see mysticks become part of a wider 'Christian tradition' of mystical theology, as opposed to being viewed as specifically sectarian or Catholic writers. In their desire to return to the teachings of ancient and pure Christianity, as well as foster peaceful relations between those of different confessional stances, the Philadelphians believed mysticks represented 'true Christians' throughout history who had inherited the gift of receiving the Holy Spirit. Encouraged by irenic currents of spirituality from the Continent, they believed works of mystical theology were records of the movements of the Holy Spirit and testament to the

imminence of the second coming of Christ. Their engagement with mysticks becomes so advanced that for the first time we begin to see subcategorizations such as ‘ancient mysticks’, ‘modern mysticks’, ‘English mysticks’ and ‘medieval mysticks’. It was this detailed and dedicated engagement with mystical theology which ultimately caused their downfall.

## Chapter 5: The Philadelphian Society Reconsidered

There shall certainly be a Subsiding and Sinking down of all Mountainous Church power, into the Philadelphian Plain, [...] they of it shall worship the Ascending witnesses; For that whole State of things since the Reformation shall be look'd back upon with Repentance, and self Condemnation, as no way Comporting with the Kingdom of Christ, but as One Demeritorious Cause of Sealing the Thunders, or Staying the powers of the Gospel, from bringing forth the Kingdom of Christ. The whole Robe or Garments of that State shall be laid aside, as Defiled.<sup>776</sup>

These powerful words of millenarian prediction came from the Congregationalist Thomas Beverley. He foresaw the downfall of all established Churches and the rise of a new Philadelphian Church of true believers. He criticized any established Church, including the Church of England, which had sought to 'shut the Door of the worship and ministration of Philadelphian witnesses' to the coming millennium. He saw the history of Christianity framed within the narrative of the seven Churches of Asia outlined in the Book of Revelation, where Protestantism was representative of the fifth Church, Sardis. It was however a 'dead' Church, a partially reformed version of the apostasy and error found in the third and fourth Churches, Pergamon and Thyatira, which represented the Roman Church. The imperfections and errors found in both the Roman and Protestant Churches would be fully ejected and reformed with the rise of the sixth Church, that of Philadelphia. Beverley predicted that this new age would arrive on 23 August, 1697, the year he also claimed that the Papal Antichrist would be toppled.<sup>777</sup> The Philadelphian Church would consist of undefiled Protestants, including many dissenters who had suffered for their piety, who would witness the dawn of Christ's millennial kingdom.<sup>778</sup>

The Philadelphian Society, which emerged in 1697 after several years of meeting in private, took Beverley's predictions to heart.<sup>779</sup> In an attempt to encourage the arrival of the Philadelphian Church, their group met to practice the 'true Christianity' of antiquity in reaction to the cold spirituality of the Church of Sardis they believed they were living under. Their beliefs were both irenic and millennialist; they believed that in preparation for the

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<sup>776</sup> Thomas Beverley, *The grand apocalyptical vision of the witnesses slain* (London, 1690), sig. a1<sup>v</sup>. For the influence of Beverley's millennialist views in Germany see Douglas H. Shantz, *Between Sardis and Philadelphia: The Life and World of Pietist Court Preacher Conrad Bröske* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), ch. 6.

<sup>777</sup> Beverley, *The grand apocalyptical vision*, p. 2. In the early 1690s when William III joined the League of Augsburg, Beverley argued that Catholic powers could be harnessed by God, with William III at the head of a large confederate army, to overthrow Louis XIV and France, see Warren Johnston, 'Radical Revelation? Apocalyptic Ideas in Late Seventeenth-Century England', in Hessayon and Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context*, pp. 183-204, p. 194.

<sup>778</sup> Shantz, *Between Sardis and Philadelphia*, p. 127.

<sup>779</sup> Edward Waple also called for the 'New Jerusalem State, coming down in the Philadelphian Succession' in his *The Book of the Revelation paraphrased; with annotations on each chapter* (London, 1693), p. 27.

coming millennium God was inspiring his chosen from all Christian denominations and giving them inner spiritual signs of the imminence of the new age.<sup>780</sup> ‘Philadelphia’ came from the Greek words *philos* and *adelphos*, meaning ‘love’ and ‘brother’ respectively. To be a Philadelphian was therefore to promote brotherly love, comradery among all Christian denominations, and further encourage any movement which showed signs of being a witness to the internal inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Their beliefs were threefold; they promoted a return to the practices of primitive Christianity, advocated the ‘Spirituality of Religion’ in opposition to the external ‘Letter & Form’, and sought to establish ‘Charity & Unity’ as opposed to the spirit of ‘Contention & Division’ which they believed was rampant among all the ‘Sects & Parties of Christendom’.<sup>781</sup> From the Roman Church, their beliefs took note of the classic works of Counter-Reformation spirituality including Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, but were inspired more readily by the works of Quietism, especially those of Miguel de Molinos and Madame Guyon. From within Protestantism they took encouragement from Pietism, the Continental reform movement which advanced a personal form of inner spirituality in reaction to institutional scholasticism. Closer to home, they were heavily influenced by the mystical movements previous chapters of this thesis have explored; they had a special affection towards the Benedictine spirituality of *Sancta Sophia* and hungrily read the translated works produced by Giles Randall and John Everard.

This chapter explores these differing influences acting upon on the Philadelphians. What it mainly concerns however is reactions to their engagement with mystical theology

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<sup>780</sup> This was taken to the extreme in their prophetess Jane Lead’s belief in universal salvation. See Walker, *The Decline of Hell*, chs. 13-15. Lead plays a smaller role in this chapter’s discussion due to the substantial pre-existing body of scholarly research which already addresses the spirituality found within her works. See Smith, ‘Mysticism and Feminism’; idem., ‘Jane Lead: the Feminist Mind and Art of a Seventeenth-Century Protestant Mystic’; idem., ‘Jane Lead: Mysticism and the Woman Cloathed in the Sun’; Patricia Demers, *Women as Interpreters of The Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), ch. 3; Diane Purkiss ‘Producing the voice, consuming the body: Women prophets of the seventeenth century’, in Isobel Grundy & Susan Wiseman (eds.), *Women, Writing, History 1640-1740* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1992), pp. 139- 58; Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ch. 6; Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Sylvia Bowerbank, ‘God As Androgyne: Jane Lead’s Rewriting of the Destiny of Nature’, *Quidditas*, Vol. 24 (2003) pp. 5-24; idem., *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004); Avra Fouffman, ‘Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst’, in Kristina K. Groover (ed.), *Things of the Spirit: Women Writers Constructing Spirituality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), pp. 90-107; Theresa D. Kemp, “‘Here Must a Beheading Go Before’”: The Antirational Androgyne Theosophy of Jane Lead’s Revelation of Revelations’, *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2005), pp. 251-75; Paul Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 5; Apetrei, ‘Mysticism and Feminism in Seventeenth-Century England’; idem., *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chs. 6-8; idem., ‘Prophecy and Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century Britain’; Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England*, ch. 5.

<sup>781</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 833, fols. 84<sup>v</sup>-85<sup>r</sup>.

from their critics. As we have already seen, there was a growing body of criticism which sought to establish mystical theology as both a sectarian and Catholic enthusiasm. This link had been made during the English Civil Wars by scaremongering Presbyterian heresiographers who sought to weaken the influence of their Independent opponents by suggesting that toleration could lead to the spread of further heresy and instability. Restoration Anglicans had defended their Church from claims of Roman supremacy by writers such as Serenus Cressy by describing mystical theology as an ‘anti-Christian’ enthusiasm which had gained authority in the Roman Church and proved that its infallibility over issues of doctrine was an illusion. These previous debates and associations of mystical theology with enthusiasm would beleaguer the Philadelphian Society from their earliest beginnings to their final downfall. Paula McDowell’s article on the ‘spectacular failure’ of the Philadelphians, published over a decade ago, is still unchallenged in providing an analysis of the downfall of the group. McDowell rightly argues that it was the rhetoric of anti-enthusiasm, found in works of John Locke, Jonathan Swift and the third Earl of Shaftesbury, which had been growing from the Restoration onwards, which was primarily the cause of their downfall.<sup>782</sup> This chapter does not seek to contest McDowell’s overall conclusion, but rather nuance it further. It argues that the Philadelphians’ engagement with mystical theology, their approval of Catholic spiritual works, and their identification with Quietist and Pietist groups on the Continent, was what their critics focused on most. This did take place within a wider framework of anti-enthusiasm as McDowell notes, but it was this specific element of their beliefs which brought them the heaviest criticism.

### Origins and Early Criticism

The Philadelphian Society had its origins in a small spiritual community guided by John Pordage and his wife Mary, formed in the early 1650s, which used their home in Bradfield as its base. This group were loyal to the teachings of Jacob Boehme and grew in notoriety for supposed visions of devils and angels.<sup>783</sup> In 1649 Pordage appeared before Berkshire county committee on charges of blasphemy, but was later cleared from ‘the horrid imputation of denying the Godhead of Christ’.<sup>784</sup> Despite his apparent innocence, Pordage

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<sup>782</sup> Paula McDowell, ‘Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2002), pp. 515–33.

<sup>783</sup> For more on this period, see Joad Raymond, ‘Radicalism and Mysticism in the Later Seventeenth Century’, in idem., (ed.), *Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication, 1100-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 317-40; idem., *Milton’s Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), ch. 5.

<sup>784</sup> John Pordage, *Truth appearing through the clouds of undeserved scandal and aspersion. Or, a brief and true account of some particulars clearly evincing the unjustness and illegality of the sentence of ejection (passed by the commissioners of Berks, appointed to judge of ministers) against Dr. John Pordage of Bradfeild in the same county* (London, 1650), pp. 2, 6. Pordage ended his

played host to a variety of guests at his Bradfield home that many contemporaries would have found suspect. Among them was the prophet Elizabeth Poole, the ‘Ranter’ Abiezer Coppe, William Everard of the ‘True Levellers’, and TheaurauJohn Tany, the self-proclaimed Lord’s high priest of the Jews.<sup>785</sup> Pordage was also known to have associated with John Everard and Giles Randall, connecting him to some leading translators and publishers of mystical works.<sup>786</sup> Pordage was eventually ejected from his rectory of Bradfield in 1654 for more suspect preaching, although he would continue to state his innocence in another published work.<sup>787</sup> His circle was joined by Thomas Bromley and Edmund Brice, two members of Oxford University, as well as Philip Herbert, fifth Earl of Pembroke.<sup>788</sup> Thomas Tenison later wrote that these Behmenists should be seen as part of a wider dissenting faction which contained Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists, Familists, Seekers, antinomians, Ranters, Quakers and Muggletonians.<sup>789</sup> Tenison defended the existing Church of England against the fear that these groups would try to unite to form a new national Church and promote the ‘dissettlement’ of the existing one. Although Tenison later argued for comprehension and toleration of dissenters, his work shows that this early group of Behmenists were associated with the dangers of nonconformity posed by groups like the Quakers.

In 1673 the prophetess Jane Lead joined this circle, eventually living with Pordage after the death of her husband left her impoverished in 1674. Lead took over leadership of the group in 1681 after Pordage’s death, writing the preface to his *Theologia Mystica*, a small extract from his ‘sublime and mystical Writings’, in 1683.<sup>790</sup> She is recorded as staying in Lady Mico’s College for Impoverished Gentlewomen in Stepney in 1694, before being joined by Richard Roach and Francis Lee to form the Philadelphian Society. Roach

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account with the line ‘the time will come, when his pretended guilt will appear to be innocency, and their innocency but veiled guilt’ (p. 6).

<sup>785</sup> Ariel Hessayon, ‘Pordage, John (*bap.* 1607, *d.* 1681)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22546>, accessed 21 May 2014]

<sup>786</sup> Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, p. 106.

<sup>787</sup> John Pordage, *Innocencie appearing, through the dark mists of pretended guilt. Or, A full and true narration of the unjust and illegal proceedings of the commissioners of Berks, (for ejecting scandalous and insufficient ministers) against John Pordage of Bradfield in the same county* (London, 1655).

<sup>788</sup> Pembroke was particularly said to have been ‘a little addicted’ to the mystical theology of Boehme, see Ariel Hessayon, ‘Jacob Boehme’s Writings During the English Revolution’, in Ariel Hessayon and Sarah Apetrei (eds.), *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 71- 97, p. 91.

<sup>789</sup> Thomas Tenison, *An argument for union taken from the true interest of those dissenters in England who profess and call themselves Protestants* (London, 1683), p. 4.

<sup>790</sup> John Pordage, *Theologia mystica, or, The mystic divinitie of the aeternal invisibles, viz., the archetypous globe, or the original globe, or world of all globes, worlds, essences, centers, elements, principles and creations whatsoever* (London, 1683), p. 1. See also Samuel Pordage, *Mundorum explicatio, or, The explanation of an hieroglyphical figure* (London, 1661).

and Lee both attended Merchant Taylors' School in London and later both matriculated at St John's College, Oxford. Roach was ordained as a priest on 16 March 1690 and was appointed to the rectory of St Augustine, Hackney, on the day after his ordination, where he remained until his death. Lee abandoned university due to his nonjuring principles in the summer of 1691 and travelled across the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, entering the University of Leiden in 1692 to study medicine. He returned to England in 1694 and married the daughter of Jane Lead shortly after, before assuming the main duties of guiding the Philadelphians with Roach after their emergence into public view in 1697.<sup>791</sup>

Sarah Apetrei's recent comment that the group lived as an 'almost monastic society' during the 1670s and 1680s has a precedent in the criticisms of their opponents.<sup>792</sup> One of the earliest critics of the group was the Presbyterian Richard Baxter. Baxter's concerns were focused on Thomas Bromley, who had joined the early group after hearing a sermon by Pordage and written *The way to the Sabbath of rest* (1655), a work heavily inspired by the works of Boehme.<sup>793</sup> It was Bromley's mother who had requested that Baxter intervene in the spiritual interests of her son when he became 'the chief Person of the Doctor's Family-Communion'. He apparently hungered 'after the highest Spiritual state' through the communion with angels the group had supposedly experienced. Baxter revealed Bromley did not know if the lights and odd sights he was experiencing were with the eye of the body or the mind, i.e. real or illusory.<sup>794</sup> Baxter was mainly concerned with Bromley's rejection of property and promotion of celibacy as they smacked too much of the monasticism which 'the Monks among the Papists swear to do, as part of their state of perfection'.<sup>795</sup> He observed that Bromley had become the 'young, raw Scholar of some Fryar' he did not fully understand and subsequently had carried his goal of perfection further than intended.<sup>796</sup> Baxter thought that the Pordage group had succumbed entirely to this monastic ambition and

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<sup>791</sup> B. J. Gibbons, 'Lee, Francis (1661–1719)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16281>, accessed 5 June 2014]

<sup>792</sup> Sarah Apetrei, 'Epilogue: Jane Lead and the Philadelphian Society', in Hessayon and Apetrei (eds.), *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme*, pp. 92-94, p. 92.

<sup>793</sup> Thomas Bromley, *The way to the sabbath of rest. Or, The souls progresse in the work of regeneration. Being a brief experimental discourse of the new-birth* (London, 1655). Like Pordage's *Theologia Mystica*, he too made unspecified references to 'mystical men' (p. 34).

<sup>794</sup> Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxters narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times faithfully publish'd from his own original manuscript by Matthew Sylvester* (London, 1696), p. 78.

<sup>795</sup> Richard Baxter, *A treatise of self-denyall* (London, 1659), p. 267.

<sup>796</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, p. 78. He admitted elsewhere that he had admiration for 'Papist' writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Tauler, Thomas à Kempis, Francis de Sales and Augustine Baker, but argued it was not for 'raw ungrounded Protestants to cast themselves on the Temptation of Popish Company or Books', *Against the revolt to a foreign jurisdiction, which would be to England its perjury, church-ruine, and slavery* (London, 1691), p. 538.

were ‘distracted, and overcome with Melancholy, by studying *Behmen* and that way’.<sup>797</sup> He believed that their monastic way of life was preparation for the movement of the Holy Spirit among them, at which point they would send missionaries out into the world to ‘unite and reconcile, and heal the Churches’, but Baxter noted that they were ‘latent and their work undone’. Echoing the charges of early Presbyterian heresiographers he accused them of being too influenced by early sectarianism which had also promoted ‘Papal Pride and Contempt’. He noted that:

All these with subtile Diligence promote most of the Papal Cause, and get in with the Religious sort, either upon pretence of *Austerity, Mortification, Angelical Communion, or Clearer Light*; but none of them yet owneth the Name of a *Papist*, but what they are indeed, and who sendeth them, and what is their Work, though I strongly conjecture, I will not assert, because I am not fully certain: Let time discover them.<sup>798</sup>

Baxter was not wrong to assume the Pordage circle had radical connections. John Etherington had accused Pordage, alongside Giles Randall and John Everard, of preaching Familist doctrines as explored previously in this study.<sup>799</sup> He had described the circle of consisting of ‘D. *Everet*, one *Shaw*, and at this present one D. *Gill*, publicly in the midst of this city of *London*, and one that went from hence to *Redding*, D. *Pordage*, who was in expectation of (if he hath not obtained) the chief publike place there’.<sup>800</sup> Jane Lead, before joining the Pordage circle, had travelled to London at the height of this sectarian frenzy in 1643. There she met Tobias Crisp, a notorious antinomian, who deeply inspired her own beliefs in universal salvation.<sup>801</sup> This early group was therefore heavily linked to others who had used mystical theology in the 1640s and suffered accusations of popery at the hands of Presbyterian heresiographers. It should come as no surprise that those who associated the early group with mystical theology, Catholicism, and sectarian claims to perfection would influence later critics who attacked them on similar grounds. Thomas Beverley, during his predictions of the imminence of the Philadelphian Church, had also defended the antinomian

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<sup>797</sup> Richard Baxter, *The certainty of the worlds of spirits and, consequently, of the immortality of souls of the malice and misery of the devils and the damned: and of the blessedness of the justified, fully evinced by the unquestionable histories of apparitions, operations, witchcrafts, voices &c* (London, 1691), p. 176. Elsewhere Baxter told of how Pordage’s ‘*Mystica Theologia* pretendeth to far greater discovery of the Deity and Trinity, and the World, than ever Christ, Prophets or Apostles gave us’ in his *An end of doctrinal controversies which have lately troubled the churches by reconciling explication without much disputing* (London, 1691), p. xxi.

<sup>798</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, p. 78.

<sup>799</sup> See Chapter 2 above.

<sup>800</sup> Etherington, *A brief discovery of the blasphemous doctrine of familisme*, p. 10.

<sup>801</sup> Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), p. 19.



writings of Crisp, which were republished by Crisp's son in 1690.<sup>802</sup> Lead was also unapologetic in admitting the influence of Crisp in her writings.<sup>803</sup> When the Philadelphians emerged in 1697 they were living in the shadow of the English Revolution which had hung long and dark across the last decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>804</sup> Fears of sexual promiscuity, unlawfulness, and disorder, all associated with antinomian, Familist and perfectionist beliefs, would have immediately coloured impressions of this newly emerged group. Almost immediately in 1697 Daniel Lafite referred to the Philadelphians as deriving their beliefs 'from a Sect long since started up, calling themselves the Family of Love, now stilling themselves Philadelphians'.<sup>805</sup> Clearly their origins were noted as suspicious by contemporary observers.

### **Millennialism and Thomas Beverley**

Baxter's observation that they were waiting for the movement of the Holy Spirit to prompt them to emerge into the world and work towards healing the divisions of Christendom suggests that the themes of Christian reconciliation and personal religious experience had been constantly at the forefront of their beliefs. But it was the millenarian predictions of Thomas Beverley which motivated them the most. Although the Philadelphians directly cited Beverley in the context of his millennial predictions, his earlier works on Christian reconciliation and the activities of the soul hint that his influence on the group ran deeper.<sup>806</sup> To understand why the Philadelphians emerged and the context in which Beverley made his predictions, we must first understand something of the nature of millennialist beliefs in seventeenth-century England.

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<sup>802</sup> Tobias Crisp, *Christ alone exalted being the compleat works of Tobias Crisp, D.D* (London, 1690). For Beverley's defence see his *A conciliatoy judgment concerning Dr. Crisp's sermons and Mr. Baxter's dissatisfactions in them by T. Beverley* (London, 1690).

<sup>803</sup> Hirst, *Jane Leade*, p. 19.

<sup>804</sup> Sharon Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 154.

<sup>805</sup> Daniel Lafite, *The principles of a people stiling themselves Philadelphians discovered in their nicest points and matters; accurately handled, shewing their rise, continuance, and tenents in doctrine and manner of proceeding, &c. Also a curious discourse between an English dissenter and French Protestant, by way of dialogue, in vindication of the Church of England against novelties in religion* (London, 1697), p. 1. As late as 1710 this comparison remained; Richard Steele described in the *Tatler* how 'they called themselves the Philadelphians, or the Family of Love', quoted in McDowell, *Enlightenment Enthusiasms*, p. 526.

<sup>806</sup> See for example his *The great soul of man, or, The soul in its likeness to God* (London, 1675); idem., *The principles of Protestant truth and peace in four treatises : viz. the true state of liberty of conscience, in freedom from penal laws and church-censures, the obligations to national true religion, the nature of scandal, particularly as it relates to indifferent things, a Catholick catechism, shewing the true grounds upon which the Catholick religion is ascertained* (London, 1683); I am grateful to Warren Johnston for alerting me to these references and for discussions relating to Beverley and the Philadelphians.

Although Beverley was undoubtedly the most prolific writer of apocalyptic visions in the late seventeenth century, his excitement about the prospect of a new millennium was heavily influenced by previous readings of Revelation; an ingrained feature of Protestant polemic since the sixteenth century. Protestants had interpreted Revelation as the persecution of true Christians by the Antichrist, or the Pope of Rome, and interpreted it historically as a prophecy of God's plan for the world. The Antichrist would be exposed and defeated, leading to the second coming of Christ and the triumph of the saints. It fulfilled a specific role in justifying the upheavals of the Reformation and the rejection of Catholicism, as well as a defence against Catholic claims to historical validity through the visible Church.<sup>807</sup> The *Key of the Revelation* by Joseph Mede had been printed by order of the House of Commons in 1642 and was highly influential. Mede's dating of the millennial period as something forthcoming, rather than having already occurred in the far past, as well as his understanding of Christ's rule as a terrestrial rather than spiritual one, had greatly excited groups such as the Fifth Monarchists.<sup>808</sup> The collapse of print control in the early 1640s allowed previously restricted works of millennialism such as Thomas Goodwin's *A Glimpse of Sions Glory* (1641) to be printed.<sup>809</sup> The Civil Wars were framed as a decisive apocalyptic and millenarian struggle against the Antichrist in the form of the Catholic court of Charles I and the Laudian regime by Puritan preachers; a millennialism very different to the calm and academic speculations of Mede, who had even hoped that the downfall of Rome would be bloodless.<sup>810</sup> In the Restoration Henry More had promoted a form of conservative millennialism in reaction to the subversive form it had taken in the Interregnum. He attempted to rehabilitate Mede's works from the taint of radicalism it was accused of inspiring in the 1640s and 1650s. Nathaniel Hardy, one of the seven ministers sent to meet Charles II at The Hague in 1660, even went as far as to argue that the Restoration Church under Charles II represented the Philadelphian Church, an argument also used by Gilbert Burnet to suppress the possibility of any future political revolutions by

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<sup>807</sup> For the political implications of this belief see Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Bernard Capp, 'The political dimension of apocalyptic thought', in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (eds.), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 93-124; idem., *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008); Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

<sup>808</sup> Steven Goldsmith, *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 92.

<sup>809</sup> Thomas Goodwin, *A glimpse of Sions glory, or, The churches beautie specified published for the good and benefit of all those whose hearts are raised up in the expectation of the glorious liberties of the saints* (London, 1641).

<sup>810</sup> Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp. 35-45.

nonconformists which might be justified using Revelation.<sup>811</sup> After the Restoration millenarian and apocalyptic speculation among nonconformists did not vanish nor become the sole preserve of a few ‘cranks’. It was adapted into a moderate form which did not end in violent resistance to established regimes by dissenting writers in light of the post-1660 religious landscape which punished them for their nonconformity. Millenarianism in post-1660 England therefore took two forms; that of royalists and Anglicans who presented the Restoration as a great prophetic event, and that of the dissenters who saw their suffering in prophetic terms.<sup>812</sup>

By the time Beverley made his predictions in the 1690s, events in England were understood in a way that would have excited millennial expectations. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the rule of William III and Mary were widely heralded as the beginning of the downfall of the papacy and the final defeat of the Antichrist. Both Anglicans and nonconformists shared the belief that the Revolution was a step towards the fulfilment of the prophecies of Revelation, in which England was central. Anglican writers argued that the Revolution had proved the primacy and legitimacy of the Church of England, while nonconformists argued that the defeat of Catholicism in England was only a partial success, and should be followed by comprehension of dissenters into the national Church. The reign of James II had only fanned the flames of Protestant millennialism, which had always used anti-Catholicism as one of its central tenets. The rise of an openly Catholic king to the English throne inspired more claims that the struggle against the Roman Antichrist was upon them, a claim which had origins in the fears over the succession of James upon the death of Charles II which formed a major part of the Exclusion Crisis in the early 1680s.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> Warren Johnston, ‘The Anglican Apocalypse in Restoration England’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2004), pp. 467-501. For a detailed discussion of the historiography on millenarianism and the apocalypse in the seventeenth century see idem., *Revelation Restored: The Apocalypse in later Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011). See also Paul J. Korshin, ‘Queuing and Waiting: The Apocalypse in England, 1660-1715’, in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, pp. 240-65; Johannes van den Berg, ‘Continuity Within a Changing Context: Henry More’s Millenarianism, Seen Against the Background of the Millenarian Concepts of Joseph Mede’, *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, Vol. 14 (1988), pp. 185-202; Richard H. Popkin, ‘The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought: Scepticism, Science and Millenarianism’, in Richard H. Popkin (ed.), *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 90-119; Philip C. Almond, ‘Henry More and the Apocalypse’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (1993), pp. 189-200; Sarah Hutton, ‘Henry More and the Apocalypse’, in Michael Wilks (ed.), *Prophecy and Eschatology: Studies in Church History 10* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 131-40; idem., ‘More, Newton, and the Language of Biblical Prophecy’, in James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (eds.), *The Books of Nature and Scripture: Recent Essays on Natural Philosophy, Theology, and Biblical Criticism in the Netherlands of Spinoza’s Time and the British Isles of Newton’s Time* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), pp. 39-54.

<sup>812</sup> Warren Johnston, ‘The Patience of the Saints, the Apocalypse, and Moderate Nonconformity in Restoration England’, *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2003), pp. 505-20; idem., ‘The Anglican Apocalypse’.

<sup>813</sup> Warren Johnston, ‘Revelation and the Revolution of 1688-1689’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2005), pp. 351-89.

Beverley was heavily influenced by these events. Imprisoned in the mid-1680s for arguing against religious uniformity, he published over fifteen works from within prison until he was released in 1691. His writings engaged directly with the belief that the Antichrist, the beast, the whore and Babylon all corresponded to the Roman Church and the papacy, and provided apocalyptic justification for the downfall of James. Although Beverley warned against any sedition, rebellion or violence, in 1687 he wrote that he was confident that God would replace James by using other rulers and princes within ten years, leading to the eventual downfall of the papacy by 1697.<sup>814</sup> Events up until 1697 continued to reassure Beverley of the validity of his exegesis, including the likelihood of reforms to include dissenters in the national Church in the summer and autumn of 1689, successful campaigns in Ireland in 1691, the death of Queen Mary in 1694, and two events in 1697; the Imperial and Russian victories against the Turks, and the League of Augsburg's success against the French which culminated in the Treaty of Ryswick. Despite his humiliation when his prophecies were proven false, Beverley continued to note great events and insisted that 1699, then 1700, was the year of the millennium. Both these dates passed with little signs of an imminent second coming, and Beverley is thought to have died in 1702.<sup>815</sup>

### **The Philadelphian Moment**

Despite Beverley's predictions bearing no fruit, they did generate considerable excitement among the Philadelphians who believed that there was 'Great Alarm in this Nation, & an Expectation raised in many, of Some Appearance more than Ordinary of the Power of Christs Kingdom, to be Manifested in the Year of our Lord 1697'.<sup>816</sup> They had met in private since 1694, but on 23 August 1697, the very date Beverley laid so much stress on, they publically declared their intentions to set up a Philadelphian Society and revealed the constitutions which would underpin it. Beverley met with the Philadelphians after this public declaration, and the meeting revealed that they were diverging from Beverley in one fundamental way. They spoke of a 'Kingdom First in the Spirit, and Inward Power' and did not expect 'the great things which he did'. Beverley looked to the Philadelphians and found nothing 'to Answer His Scheme of Things'.<sup>817</sup> They disagreed with Beverley's insistence

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<sup>814</sup> Shantz, *Between Sardis and Philadelphia*, pp. 125-30.

<sup>815</sup> Warren Johnston, 'Thomas Beverley and the "Late Great Revolution": English Apocalyptic Expectation in the Late Seventeenth Century', in Hessayon and Keene (eds.), *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, pp. 158-75; idem., 'Radical Revelation? Apocalyptic Ideas in Late Seventeenth-Century England'.

<sup>816</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 833, fol. 83r.

<sup>817</sup> Richard Roach, *The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant; Coming Now in the Power and Kingdom of His Father, To Reign with his Saints on Earth* (London, 1727), p. xix.

that Christ would have a personal presence in the world during the millennium and instead insisted that Christ would work through them for the regeneration of the Church.<sup>818</sup>

Their declaration strongly denied accusations they were a new sect and insisted that they were a group under which those of all religions denominations could come together.<sup>819</sup> Their propositions, all reinforced with scriptural references, spoke of ‘Undivided Unity, and Perfect Uniformity’ within a restored ‘Holy, and Catholick Church’ which would be brought about and vitalized by an ‘Irradiation from the Spirit of Christ’. Those awaiting this restored Christianity needed the qualities of humility, resignation and perseverance. While waiting they were to seek out and pray for ‘Divine’ or ‘Secret Learning’ which would vastly exceed the wit and inquiry of even ‘the most sagacious Inquirers’. All of this would result in an eventual ‘Effusion of the Spirit’ which would heal all the divisions and sects within Christianity, all of which claimed to be the true Church. No human means could unite the Roman, Lutheran, Calvinist and English Churches together, and so the Philadelphians waited for the ‘Revelation of the Kingdom of God within the Soul’ by adhering to ‘Catholick Love and Apostolic Faith’, keeping ‘Warm the Spirit of Love towards those of all Religious and Churches’ until the power of the Holy Spirit moved them all into a perfect and lasting unity.

Their mystical theology was one in which Christ came first to the soul, purifying and anointing it. It was an internal revelation; a reformation of the soul which would precede the reformation of the outer Church. This mystical experience would happen in those of all different religious denominations and would inspire them all to work together to bring about the arrival of the Philadelphian Church. Only after this would the ‘Personal Appearance of Christ’ come about through the efforts of these religious. They believed that ‘God is stirring up some Persons in several Countries, to Wait in Faith and Prayer for these Ends, and with these Qualifications, till such a Pure Church may arise’.<sup>820</sup> They cited witnesses to this movement in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France, Scotland and England as proof of their beliefs.

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<sup>818</sup> Johnston, *Revelation Restored*, p. 42. See for example Jane Lead’s insistence that ‘the Lord will but supply the visible Humanity with a mighty flow from the Deity, and with a witnessing Omnipotency, it will be sufficient and considerable Glory’ in her *The Revelation of revelations particularly as an essay towards the unsealing, opening and discovering the seven seals, the seven thunders, and the New-Jerusalem state* (London, 1683), p. 26.

<sup>819</sup> Even after Roach had defended the Philadelphians to the Archbishop of Canterbury, others were promising to ‘do all that lyes in their power to put a stop to the growth and progress of your Sect’, Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 832, fol. 21<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>820</sup> This summary of their propositions and beliefs is taken from *Propositions Extracted From the Reasons for the Foundation and Promotion of a Philadelphian Society* (London, 1697).

That they should have emerged into the public eye at all seems to have been a begrudging act of conformity to the conditions of the 1689 Toleration Act rather than any real desire to publicize their beliefs. They noted in their *Theosophical Transactions*, the memoirs which were printed every few months in 1697, that since 1694 they had privately met to ‘wait upon the Powers of the World to come’, or as Richard Roach claimed, to be ‘visited from above with extraordinary Communications’.<sup>821</sup> They existed in London alongside other groups promoting the ‘reformation of manners’, a likely reference to Edward Stephens’s small society of followers, founded in the early 1690s. Stephens was critical of the Philadelphians on the grounds he believed they were a new sect seeking to weaken the Church of England, but was similar to them in many ways. By the 1690s many groups had formed with the aim of advancing morality and piety, and these religious societies were a feature of London life. Many of these groups had origins in the 1670s and 1680s, increasingly convinced that immorality and vice were the cause of England’s suffering under a Catholic king in the form of James II. They felt that the excesses of the Jacobean court had trickled down into everyday society, and believed that the Revolution was the ideal time for a reformation of manners to reverse this trend.<sup>822</sup> Stephens’s own group met in private, much like the Philadelphians had, and it is entirely possible that the Philadelphians used these flourishing societies as a model to justify their own meetings, as they all shared a desire to return to a morally pure and sacred form of ancient Christianity.<sup>823</sup> Like Stephens, they had a shared interest in monasticism. Mary Astell had proposed the concept of a ‘Protestant nunnery’ as a place for education of women in her *Serious Proposal to Ladies*, part of which the Philadelphians printed in their *Theosophical Transactions*, while Stephens’s own

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<sup>821</sup> *Theosophical Transactions by the Philadelphian Society* (London, 1697), p. 223; Roach quoted in Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1948), p. 87.

<sup>822</sup> Karen Sonnelitter, ‘The Reformation of Manners Societies, the Monarchy, and the English State, 1696-1714’, *Historian*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (2010), pp. 517-42, p. 518. See also T.C. Curtis and W.A. Speck, ‘The Societies for the Reformation of Manners: A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Moral Reform’, *Literature and History*, Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 45-64; Tina Isaacs, ‘The Anglican Hierarchy and the Reformation of Manners, 1688-1738’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1982), pp. 391-411; Shelley Burt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 3; John Spurr, ‘The Church, the societies and the moral revolution of 1688’, in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England c. 1689- c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 127-42; Craig Rose, ‘Providence, Protestant Union and Godly Reformation in the 1690s’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 3 (1993), pp. 151-69; Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 3; Brent S. Sirota, *The Christian Monitors: The Church of England and the Age of Benevolence, 1680-1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), ch. 2.

<sup>823</sup> See for example Eamon Duffy, ‘Primitive Christianity Revived: Religious Renewal in Augustan England’, in Derek Baker (ed.), *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), pp. 287-300.

*Asceticks* (1696) defended the monastic life as ‘the greatest Perfection that Mortals are capable of’.<sup>824</sup>

The relative peace of their meetings between 1694 and 1697, where they met privately under the guise of being one of a number of groups promoting the reformation of manners, was shattered when they were ‘necessitated by the Law of the Land to be Publick, in that we could not shut out any that intruded upon us’. The 1689 Toleration Act made specific reference to its benefits becoming void if the doors of nonconformist religious meetings were locked, barred, or bolted, and it seems that this removed the Philadelphians’ ability to screen attendance at their meetings. Despite wishing to remain private, the numbers at their meetings swelled and forced them to split their meetings into two separate locations.<sup>825</sup> Almost immediately they had to repeat claims that they had not set themselves up ‘with any Sectarian Design’, although their meetings being classified under the terms of the Toleration Act would have suggested otherwise to outsiders. They insisted they did not claim themselves to be perfect, nor believe themselves to be the Philadelphian Church, although they did believe ‘such a Church there shall be upon Earth, Pure, Perfect and Holy, to meet the Lord from Heaven’.<sup>826</sup>

Their meetings would open with a reading from Scripture, after which anyone had ‘Liberty to Prophesie’. They requested members waited ‘in Silence to be filled with the sweet internal Breathings of the Divine Spirit [...] before they presume to break out into Words’, after which they could read a portion of Scripture and expound their new ‘experimental’ knowledge of it. Women were encouraged to speak, pray and prophesize, as long as it was with ‘Sobriety and Modesty’. All members were encouraged to act on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit within them, practicing and overcoming weakness until they ‘speak as the very Oracles of God, without the Alloy their own Natural and Creaturely Imperfections’.<sup>827</sup> We would be forgiven in thinking that all of this sounded very similar to

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<sup>824</sup> Bridget Hill, ‘A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 117, No. 1 (1987), pp. 107-30; *Theosophical Transactions*, pp. 59-60; Edward Stephens, *Asceticks, or, The heroick piety & virtue of the ancient Christian anchorites and coenobites. exemplary asceticks* (London, 1696), p. 4. For more on this attitude towards monasticism see Earl of Wicklow, ‘The Monastic Revival in the Anglican Communion’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 42, No. 168 (1953), pp. 420-32; Greg Peters, *Reforming the Monastery: Protestant Theologies of the Religious Life* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), ch. 2; Sarah Apetrei, ‘“The Life of Angels”: Celibacy and Asceticism in Anglicanism 1660-c.1700’, *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2011), pp. 247-74. For the limits of this see Isaacs, ‘The Anglican Hierarchy’.

<sup>825</sup> Their meetings took place at several places around London. Originally they were based at Baldwin Gardens, with a second meeting place opened at Hungerford due to demand, which was closed within a year due to violent opposition. A third location was Westmoreland House, which closed due to further disruption. After a time at Twisters Alley in Bunhill Fields, then Loriner’s Hall, they were forced back closer to home in Hoxton Square; Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, pp. 121-22.

<sup>826</sup> *Theosophical Transactions*, p. 224.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221-23.

Quaker practice, and this fact was widely noted by their contemporaries. Criticism of the Philadelphians by comparing them to Quakers is discussed later in this chapter, but for now it is interesting to note the surviving evidence of Quakers visiting Philadelphian meetings. Richard Claridge, a former Church of England priest who became a Baptist around 1689 and finally a Quaker in 1696, noted in his memoirs that:

A few People called themselves by the Name of the Philadelphian Society, having spread some Papers abroad relating to the said Society, and therein given Notice of their Meeting in Hungerford-Market, I was moved this 15<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> Month Called August, 1697, [...] to satisfy my self about the People, and their Worship, that made high Pretences to such a peculiar Dispensation of the Spirit, which no other Professors of Christianity, besides themselves (if they may be credited) were under.<sup>828</sup>

Claridge witnessed a man with arms crossed, head bowed and eyes shut speak of how God had entrusted them with a ‘peculiar Dispensation of the Spirit’ that had not been seen since the ‘Apostles Days’.<sup>829</sup> He described a woman identified as Cresilla and dressed like ‘the Holy Women of Old’ who talked of the ‘Spiritual Flesh and Blood of Christ’.<sup>830</sup> From these two Claridge gleaned that they held the doctrine of universal redemption and that Christ had taken away their sins, but maintained that corruptions and imperfections remained during this life. The Philadelphians were apparently not to Claridge’s taste however. He concluded that ‘The Lord hath shewn me that this Society is begun in Man’s Spirit and Will, and shall soon pass away as a Morning Cloud, or as the Early Dew’.<sup>831</sup>

Claridge’s conclusion proved to be accurate, as the group retreated from view in 1703 and largely dissolved after the death of Jane Lead in 1704. What is less clear however is why they collapsed after only a few years in the public eye. As we have already seen, early criticism of the group tended to focus on the radical milieu from which they emerged, identifying them with the Familist, antinomian and perfectionist beliefs that had been reported as out of control by Presbyterian heresiographers during the Civil Wars. But there are a number of additional contexts the Philadelphians were understood in; they were inculcated in the ongoing debate on mystical theology as enthusiasm and were viewed in light of the debates which had raged between Edward Stillingfleet and Serenus Cressy in the 1660s and 1670s. They were also criticized on the grounds of their links with Pietism and Quietism on the Continent. Connecting themselves to other groups which held mystical

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<sup>828</sup> *The Life and Posthumous Works of Richard Claridge, being Memoirs and Manuscripts Relating to His Experiences and Progress in Religion: His Changes in Opinion, and Reasons for them* (London, 1726), p. 34.

<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.



theology in a positive light also brought them reproach. It is these contexts the rest of this chapter will focus on.

### **The Criticisms of Henry Dodwell and Edward Stephens**

We have previously seen that Catholic mystical theology was associated with enthusiasm in debates concerning infallibility, tradition and *sola scriptura*. The Philadelphians were the first recipients of the consequences of these debates and were unable to escape association with Cressy, Augustine Baker and mystical theology in general. We can see this through the criticisms of Henry Dodwell, whose attitude towards mystical theology was made perfectly clear in Chapter 3, and Edward Stephens. Both men wrote to Francis Lee, co-leader of the Philadelphian Society alongside Richard Roach, to voice their concerns about the group. In a letter dated 12 October 1697, Dodwell revealed his disappointment that Lee was involved in a ‘new division from that Church for whose Principles you had so graciously suffered’.<sup>832</sup> He expressed his hope that Lee had not been seduced by ‘luscious fancies’ or ‘warm unaccountable affections’ that were apparently excusable in a person of lesser education. He reminded Lee that ‘Enthusiasm may be very pleasing and endearing for a time’ but throughout history had never lasted more than a generation. Dodwell pointed out that the Apostles had restrained women who believed they had special gifts and warned Lee ‘for God’s sake rob not the Church of this security in your trial of new experiments’.<sup>833</sup> Dodwell’s main concern was that this new group would tempt more men away from the established Church, weakening it further. Lee’s reply horrified Dodwell. In it he insisted that he could differentiate between the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of enthusiasm. He rebuked the claim of having an ‘overheated imagination’ and instead reaffirmed his belief in divine providence and the extraordinary powers of the Holy Spirit, believing that they were the only way to restore the primitive Church and bring peace.<sup>834</sup> Because of Lee’s refusal to leave the Philadelphians, Dodwell’s next letter was decidedly more direct:

If you had practiced in the Apostles’ times, as you do now, your practice would have been censured as injurious to the unity of the Spirit, and therefore schismatical. Your forsaking the assemblies of our lawful Bishops, and your joining in communion with those divided from them upon your Philadelphian principles, must needs have been so interpreted. And no pretensions to the Spirit could then have excused you.<sup>835</sup>

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<sup>832</sup> Dr William’s Library MS 24.109.7-9, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>834</sup> Christopher Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials for an Adequate Biography of the Celebrated Divine and Theosopher William Law* (London: Privately Published, 1854), pp. 188-90.

<sup>835</sup> Dr William’s Library MS 24.109.7-9, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>. In the same letter (fol. 4<sup>r</sup>) Dodwell likened Lee to Tertullian, who was ‘so very learned, so zealous, so pious a man was notwithstanding, afterwards seduced out of the communion of the Church, and became the head of a schism, or the like account as you are, by his too forward zeal for the prophecies of Montanus and his women prophetesses’.

The suspicions of enthusiasm and nonconformity were growing. But this was not Dodwell's only worry about the activities of the group, as he had clear suspicions that mystical theology was fuelling their enthusiastical beliefs. In a postscript to the same letter, he suggested to Lee:

I wish you would also be pleased to see, what Bishop Stillingfleet hath written against Mr. Cressy's *Sancta Sophia*. You will there find, that the Mystical Divinity, which is the foundation of Quietism, was rather derived from the Philosophical religion invented by the later Platonists, and among them admired by the great enemy of the Christian religion, Porphyry, than from any tradition derived from the Apostles. The pretended Areopagite has given it great authority with those, who did not know that he was an impostor: and it seems to be the language of those Platonists, that was imitated by that impostor. They seem to understand the mystical unity of a coalescence with God and Christ, which certainly is against the doctrine of Christ.<sup>836</sup>

Here we have a direct link to earlier debates between Serenus Cressy and Edward Stillingfleet. As far as Dodwell was concerned Stillingfleet had proven mystical theology to be against the basic doctrines of Christianity. The Philadelphians however believed that *Sancta Sophia*, while 'fitted chiefly to the Spiritual Guides of the Church of Rome' could be useful to all, especially when combined with Abraham Woodhead's *The Roman-church's devotions vindicated* (1672). Both works could be 'of very great Use to Devout Souls in their Process to the highest State of Perfection which this Life arrives to'.<sup>837</sup> In doing so they directly implicated themselves in the ongoing debate over mystical theology as Catholic and sectarian enthusiasm in which Dodwell played a major role. Mystical theology then, in Dodwell's opinion, only lead to further schism, heresy and weakening of the established Church, as it had done with Quietism in France and Italy. The dangers of Quietism on the Continent were also compared to the dangers of Quakerism in England, which were seen as linked.<sup>838</sup> Mystical theology was spawning new heresies everywhere, and it is clear to see why opponents of the Philadelphians would not want such problems to spread to England. Lee replied to Dodwell's series of letters in 1701 and defended the 'mysticks of the Roman Church' about whom he had too much to say in a single letter, while also revealing that 'Dr. Stillingfleet's *Fanaticism* pleases me at the same rate as a good romance'.<sup>839</sup>

Dodwell also warned Lee of the suspect origins of the Philadelphians in a letter from 1698. After reading some of Jane Lead's books in Oxford he developed a worse opinion of the group than he had previously held and felt the need to question Lead's 'pretended

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<sup>836</sup> Ibid., fol. 4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>837</sup> *Theosophical Transactions*, p. 259.

<sup>838</sup> Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Quakerism a-la-mode, or, A history of quietism particularly that of the Lord Arch-bishop of Cambray and Madam Guyone* (Paris, 1698).

<sup>839</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 230.

familiar conversation with God'.<sup>840</sup> Surprisingly, Dodwell chose to question whether Lead wrote the accounts at all, as he believed her works were 'quite out of the way of the education, or conversation, or even reading of women'. He suggested that they were in fact the work of John Pordage. 'The old Platonic mystical divinity, of all the modern enthusiasts, of Jacob Behme' found in the works all came from Pordage, not her. Dodwell attempted to persuade Lee that the works were not divine, but rather had an origin in the radical sectarianism of the 1640s. He cautioned Lee that Pordage had practiced numerous questionable beliefs including proselytising women, conversations with angels, dabbling with evil spirits, and magic. Because of this, Dodwell warned:

I hope these heresies will oblige you to bethink yourself serious, whither this favour to enthusiasm is like to lead you. For my part, what I insisted on formerly, both in my book of Schism, and my first letter, a just prejudice against your venturing your soul on so dangerous a course; that it cuts you off from your dependence on the governors of our church and our communion, [...] Our good God extricate you out of the snares of enthusiasm and seducing spirits, wherein you are engaged.<sup>841</sup>

Lee's lengthy reply to Dodwell's claims in 1699 revealed an attempt to separate the Philadelphians from their radical origins. He insisted that after much research he found Pordage to have been a man of 'much integrity, of very deep experience in spiritual matters, and of most worthy and holy aims'.<sup>842</sup> Revealingly, he insisted that 'whatever he might have been in 1654, and before that, it is possible that in the space of twenty years, and those too under the Cross, he might become a new man. For it is not till about that time, as I perceive, that his familiar friendship began with my mother'. Lee separated the Pordage of the Philadelphian Society from the radical milieu he so clearly emerged from. 'I see as much reason to confound Simon Magus and Simon Peter' he insisted, 'as to confound Everard the sorcerer, and Pordage the Divine, together'.<sup>843</sup> In their 'move towards organisation foreign to earlier theosophy', Lee hoped to separate the Philadelphians from their earlier history.<sup>844</sup> It is highly likely that Lee privately realized the perilous position they could end up in should they be linked to the earlier sectarian uses of mystical theology. In 1701 he admitted in another letter to Dodwell that his own name and standing had been damaged by daily reports and rumours, and that he had sacrificed his own reputation 'at the feet of my dear

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<sup>840</sup> Dr William's Library MS 24.109.7-9, fol. 5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>841</sup> Ibid., fol. 7<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>842</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 203.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>844</sup> Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 65.

Lord'.<sup>845</sup> Dodwell had apparently stopped communicating, causing Lee to finish a letter to him in 1702 with the phrase 'your brother and servant, though unknown to you'.<sup>846</sup>

Lee was also visited personally by Edward Stephens at the home of Jane Lead in 1701.<sup>847</sup> As well as harbouring a positive attitude towards monasticism, he also wrote a work defending mystical theology from the attacks of Edward Stillingfleet. His *Theologica Mystica* (1697) defended the origins of mystical theology by arguing that 'in those ancient times it was believed, in all Nations, that there were Means, whereby Men and Women might come to have some Acquaintance and Communion with God'.<sup>848</sup> Stephens attacked those who criticized the 'Errors and Miscarriages of Devout People' while 'their own Parishes and Diocesses [...] sink into Insideliety [sic], for want of due Care and sufficient Instruction'.<sup>849</sup> Mystical theology could inspire people to live moral lives, commit acts of virtue and resist sinful temptation. The cause of England's 'Atheism heretofore, and of Deism at Present' was because these men smeared any use of mystical theology as enthusiasm, which had led to 'Tepidity, Carelessness, and Neglect of the most Spiritual Exercises of Religion'.<sup>850</sup> Like the Philadelphians, he also had a great respect for Augustine Baker and Serenus Cressy (Stillingfleet's numerous attacks on *Sancta Sophia* caused Stephens to nickname the book the 'Doctor's Martyr'), and his discourse on the topic finished with a summary of 'Directions given by Spiritual Writers concerning Prayer and Devotion', much of which was taken from *Sancta Sophia*.<sup>851</sup>

In 1702 Lee wrote to Stephens justifying the Philadelphian Society and defending the works of Lead.<sup>852</sup> Stephen's reply in the same year was venomous. Complaining first of Lee's handwriting, which was 'small and not very legible', he revealed he had also read the *Theosophical Transactions* of the group and found much to his dislike. 'I observe so much such affection, ostentation, and self-recommendation in what I have seen in print of your Society', he stated bluntly, 'as alone would make me suspect [...] that it is so far from being any true Christian spiritual society'. Rather he deemed the Philadelphians to be 'a new sprout of an old sect of enthusiasts, set up under a new specious name'. By 1702 Lee had

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<sup>845</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 231.

<sup>846</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>847</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>848</sup> Edward Stephens, *Theologica Mystica: two discourses concerning divine communications to souls duly disposed* (London, 1697), p. 4.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A4<sup>r</sup>, p. 40. The only examples of mystical theology Stephens could think of that counteracted this trend in England were Matthew Hale, *Contemplations moral and divine by a person of great learning and judgment* (London, 1676); Matthew Scrivener, *The method and means to a true spiritual life consisting of three parts, agreeable to the auncient way* (London, 1688), as well as the works of John Smith and Walter Cradoc.

<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 55-72.

<sup>852</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 508.

failed to separate the Philadelphians from older sectarian groups. Stephens stressed, like the Benedictines, that mystical theology did not lead to revolutions or violence, unlike ‘those Enthusiasms and Fanatick Frenzies which have been so common among Protestants’.<sup>853</sup> While both shared an interest in mystical theology, the Philadelphians’ attempts to present themselves as belonging to such a tradition, rather than having origins in Civil War radicalism, did not wash with Stephens or indeed many contemporaries. Stephens concluded by explaining to Lee that the Philadelphians followed their own imaginations and ‘eat the fruit of their own doings’. ‘Have a care how you proceed father in this Society’ he cautioned Lee, ‘and apply yourself speedily to the proper means of recovering out of the snare of the subtle enemy’.<sup>854</sup>

An unaddressed letter from Lee, written in 1700, showed his support for sectarian and Catholic mystical theology was extensive. In it he revealed his fondness for ‘Christian mysticks’ and lists several books suitable for those interested in contemplation. These included the English version of Nicholas of Cusa’s *The Vision of God* and *The Idiot*, both of which had been translated by John Everard in the 1640s. Also referenced was Giles Randall’s translation of the third book of Benet of Canfield’s *The Rule of Perfection* in the form of *The Bright Starre*, from which Lee had ‘found much benefit’. All these texts had links to the earlier antinomian and radical circles of the 1640s and were works accused of containing ‘popish errors’ of perfection. Lee argued that these texts were validated by the fact that the practices in them originated in ancient hermits and the Church Fathers, and were ‘very far from being a relict of Paganism’. Quietists also gained heavy support from Lee, and Molinos and Guyon were both suggested to be innocent of the charges brought against them. Augustine Baker and Dame Gertrude More were also cited as useful for defending the use of mystical theology and contemplation, especially in light of the Jesuit attacks on Quietist works.<sup>855</sup>

A detailed reading of the private letters of Francis Lee has revealed a number of issues bearing down on the Philadelphian Society from its very inception. In the post-1689 environment their critics were most worried about the unrest and schism the group could cause. Henry Dodwell was especially convinced that mystical theology could only lead to heresy and separation, as the Quietist troubles in Italy and France had proved. These critics were still haunted by the spectre of Civil War radicalism, and keen to prevent any more revolutions started by similar beliefs. The Church of England was a line of defence against a return to the perfectionist and antinomian beliefs of the 1640s, and that Lee would leave

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<sup>853</sup> Stephens, *Theologica Mystica*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>854</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 233.

<sup>855</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-73, 506-8.

such an establishment to fall into enthusiasm showed that such groups could once again pose a threat. Dodwell and Stephens show that the principal criticisms of the Philadelphians were focused on their links to earlier radical groups through John Pordage, a man remembered more for his Behmenist, alchemical and magical tendencies than for genuine piety. Lee's enthusiasm for mystical theology also raised worries about Quietism and the potential disruptions it could cause in England. The Philadelphians seemed to embody a double threat in the eyes of their critics; one that came from within, and one from beyond the seas. They had origins in Civil War sectarianism, recommended condemned works of 'popish errors' and sided with Quietists on the Continent whom had proven difficult to control even in the France of Louis XIV. The picture which emerges from this is one in which mystical theology, with its associations with enthusiasm and schism, stunted the chances of the Philadelphian Society flourishing almost immediately.

### **Philadelphians, Pietists and Quietists**

Questions must be asked of how Francis Lee saw Jane Lead. He had first heard of her visions in Amsterdam in 1694 where he was mixing with Behmenists and Pietists, including Pierre Poiret and Johann Georg Gichtel.<sup>856</sup> These men greatly influenced his perception of Lead. When framing Lead's *The Wars of David* (1700), Lee argued that her publications, and especially her diary, were to be viewed as a wider 'Testimony to the Truths of the Kingdom of God' which were emerging in 'Neighbouring, and in very Remote Countries'.<sup>857</sup> Lee had originally struggled to believe the 'once Secret and Extraordinary Favours of God; which some are witnesses to in these Latter Days' but by 1697 was presenting the Philadelphian Society as part of a network of 'Fellow Waiters for the same glorious Prize of the first Resurrection'.<sup>858</sup> Many of these fellow waiters may not have heard of the Philadelphians, but worked towards the same goal. On these grounds:

The numbers of this Society in other Countries may be more Considerable, then is at first easie to be believ'd. The first Motion or Eruption of it may be said to have been in Germany, where it has spread it self chiefly through the indefatigable Zeal of some of the Clergy; under the Name of PIETISM. By which a Foundation has been there laid for a greater Spirituality in the Christian Profession then was before Known, or Entertain'd except by some few: and for a greater Propagation thereof

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<sup>856</sup> The ecumenical influences on Lee while abroad should not be understated. Arthur Versluis has commented that Gichtel's letters represented a 'new and condensed application of medieval esotericism and as such is not inherently opposed to Roman Catholicism, only to its institutionalist emphases' in his 'Christian Theosophic Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Roelf van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 217-36, p. 236.

<sup>857</sup> Jane Lead, *The Wars of David and The Peaceable Reign of Solomon* (London, 1700), unpaginated page entitled 'Advertisement'.

<sup>858</sup> Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1559, fol. 21<sup>r</sup>; Francis Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society* (London, 1697), p. 11.

among well dispos'd Souls, then was from the Miraculous Days of the Church until that Day.<sup>859</sup>

In 1699 the German Pietist Johannes Kelpius wrote of a similar 'revolution' happening in all Christian denominations. According to Kelpius this revolution 'in the Roman Church goes under the Name of Quietism, in the Protestant Church under the Name of Pietism, Chiliasm, and Philadelphianism'. The Quietists had sprang up in Italy and rapidly increased 'through the whole Roman Church in many Millions', while Kelpius admitted that his pen was too dull to 'express the extraordinary Power [of] the Pietists and Chiliasts among the Protestants in Germany' as well as Switzerland, which had broken forth 'into other Nations, as in England under the name of Philadelphians'. People all over were experiencing:

Ectases, Revelations, Inspirations, Illuminations, Inspeakings, Prophesies, Apparitions, Changings of Minds, Transfigurations, Translations of their Bodys, wonderful Fastings for 11, 14, 27, 37 days, Paradysical Representations by Voices, Melodies, and Sensations to the very perceptibility of the Spectators who was about such persons, whose condition as to the inward condition of their Souls, as well as their outward Transactions, yea their very thoughts they could tell during the time of their Exstacies, though they had never seen nor heard of the Persons before.<sup>860</sup>

Kelpius and a group of around forty others had left Germany in 1693 and briefly stayed with the Philadelphians for half a year before travelling onwards to Philadelphia to build a colony along the Wissahickon river.<sup>861</sup> Their settlement was designed along monastic lines, with Kelpius having his own anchorite cell carved into the hillside.<sup>862</sup> Kelpius had been aided not only by the Philadelphians, but also by the Quakers and a group of Pietists lead by Philipp Jakob Spener at the University of Halle.<sup>863</sup> Pietists were thus the Philadelphians' 'Brethern in Germany', who had also been told by Christ to 'Pray and Wait diligently for his Appearance'.<sup>864</sup> The *Theosophical Transactions* reported on the activities of religious women in the town of Quedlinberg, a place of many 'Illustrious Females in this Age' which had also been home to a 'Famous Abby of Women, who were Sovereigns of this Town' in the past.<sup>865</sup> Pietists had been greatly excited by accounts of three visionary women circulated in letters and then published as *Actual News of Three Enthusiastic Maidens*. Anna Maria Schuchart of Erfurt reportedly fell into ecstasies and recited more than two hundred rhymed

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<sup>859</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 11.

<sup>860</sup> Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius* (Lancaster: Pennsylvania-German Society, 1917), pp. 47-49.

<sup>861</sup> For more on Kelpius and the American situation, see Jon Butler, 'Magic, Astrology, and the Early American Religious Heritage, 1600-1700', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (1979), pp. 317-46.

<sup>862</sup> Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, pp. 91-93.

<sup>863</sup> Clarke Garrett, *Origins of the Shakers: From the Old World to the New World* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 14

<sup>864</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 12.

<sup>865</sup> *Theosophical Transactions*, p. 294.

verses in half an hour, Magdalena Elrichs of Quedlinburg cried during sermons from seeing visions of Jesus with a host of angels, and Anges Gräfner predicted that Quedlinburg would be destroyed within seven days in early 1693, prompting several of her friends to flee the city.<sup>866</sup> The Philadelphians also had close links to the Petersen family, printing extracts from the work of Johanna Eleonora Petersen, translated from Dutch, in their *Theosophical Transactions*.<sup>867</sup> Clearly Jane Lead was meant to be viewed as part of this wider Pietist belief that God's word was transforming true believers regardless of their denomination in preparation for the coming millennium, and in the case of the Petersens, Lead was in turn inspiring further examples.<sup>868</sup> Many radical Pietists also communicated with Lead via letter, including Baron von Knyphausen, Gottfried Arnold and the separatists at Berleurg.<sup>869</sup> This influence was therefore obviously not one way; Lead was supported by Knyphausen who had her comfortably relocated to a house in Hoxton Square and had paid Loth Fischer to translate her new works into German.<sup>870</sup> Both Lee and Roach recorded an account of a pious woman named Hannah from Utrecht whom, when visiting a friend, was offered two books. The first was 'a mystick of a Roman-Catholick Doctor' in the words of Roach, or a 'Mystical Treatise of a Popish Doctor' according to Lee, which she had already read extensively. The other book contained two works by 'Madam Lead' which she greatly yearned to read. This woman eventually had visions of Lead on the very night of Lead's death and was clearly heavily influenced by the contents. Such an episode suggests that

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<sup>866</sup> Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. 191-95.

<sup>867</sup> *Theosophical Transactions*, pp. 142-51. See Barbara Becker-Cantarino (ed.), *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen, Written by Herself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Ruth Albrecht, 'Johanna Eleonora Petersen in the Context of Women's and Gender Studies', in Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann and James Van Horn Melton (eds.), *Pietism in Germany and North America 1680-1820* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), pp. 71-84. Hans Schneider described the Petersens as 'the most influential representatives and propagandists of the Philadelphian ideas' in his *German Radical Pietism*, trans. Gerald T. Macdonald (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2007), p. 69.

<sup>868</sup> For Pietist attempts to set up brotherhoods or colonies based on chiliastic sentiments see Claus Bernet, 'Expectations of Philadelphia and the Heavenly Jerusalem in German Pietism', in Douglas H. Shantz (ed.), *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 139-67; idem., 'The Heavenly Jerusalem as a central belief in Radical Pietism in the Eighteenth Century', *The Covenant Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2005), pp. 3-19.

<sup>869</sup> Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, pp. 24-25, 47. The Philadelphian Society's *Catalogus Amicorum in Germania* which listed their supporters on the Continent featured most of the major figures of radical Pietism, for a full transcript see Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians*, pp. 125-26.

<sup>870</sup> For the links between the Philadelphians and their counterparts in Germany see Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians*, esp. ch. 2; Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, ch. 3. A detailed account of the Continental followers of the Philadelphians can be found in Donald F. Durnbaugh, 'Jane Ward Leade (1624-1704) and the Philadelphians', in Carter Lindberg (ed.), *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 128-46.



Lead's work was considered among works of mystical theology and that many saw similar themes in Catholic works and openly associated the two.<sup>871</sup>

But exactly what was the 'Solid, Nervous and Spiritual Christianity' which could be found among the Pietists?<sup>872</sup> The phrase 'Pietism' itself was derived from the preface to the works of Johann Arndt written by Philipp Jakob Spener in 1675 and entitled *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires).<sup>873</sup> Pietism emerged from the 'crisis of piety' in Lutheranism caused by the Thirty Years War and the resulting Peace of Westphalia which had severely reversed the good fortunes the Protestant cause had enjoyed in the sixteenth century.<sup>874</sup> Both Lutherans and Catholics since the sixteenth century had perceived their troubles as a failure to engage the multitude to be religious, and both prescribed 'the moving of meditation out of the monastic cell into the private chamber' to counter this which resulted in an exchange of devotional texts between the two.<sup>875</sup> Pietism was also the heir to the 'great flood of magical, mystical and eschatological writing' which accompanied the Lutheran Reformation, the mix of which can be seen initially in Arndt, but finds greatest form in Jacob Boehme.<sup>876</sup> Both Arndt and Spener viewed this reversal of fortune as a result of people failing to truly grasp spirituality in light of intellectual scholasticism. Pietism was thus a reaction to the flowing intellectualism in Germany, which was seen by some as 'cold orthodoxy, moral laxity, and godless secularism'.<sup>877</sup> Arndt had edited the *Theologia Germanica*, translated the *Imitation of Christ* and was heavily influenced by the works of Eckhart, Tauler and Angela of

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<sup>871</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 833, fol. 89r; Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1559, fol. 1r.

<sup>872</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 12.

<sup>873</sup> Peter C. Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), p. xiii.

<sup>874</sup> The best introduction to Pietism is Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism*. Historians have disagreed largely over exactly what constitutes 'Pietism' however, for the range of definitions see Jonathan Strom, 'Problems and Promises of Pietism Research', *Church History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (2002), pp. 536-54. For historiographical overviews see W. R. Ward, 'German Pietism, 1670-1750', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (1993), pp. 476-505; Horst Weigelt, 'Interpretations of Pietism in the Research of Contemporary Church Historians', *Church History*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1970), pp. 236-41.

<sup>875</sup> W.R. Ward, *Evangelicalism, Piety and Politics: The Selected Writings of W.R. Ward* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 18.

<sup>876</sup> Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 17-21. For alchemy and Jane Lead see Paul Kleber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), ch. 4. For alchemy in Pietist writing see Douglas H. Shantz, 'The Origin of Pietist Notions of New Birth and the New Man: Alchemy and Alchemists in Gottfried Arnold and Johann Henrich Reitz', in Christian T. Collins Winn, G. William Carlson, Christopher Gehrz, and Eric Holst (eds.), *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), pp. 29-41.

<sup>877</sup> Chad Meister and J. B. Stump, *Christian Thought: A Historical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 407. Jonathan I. Israel notes that 'in Germany, from the 1670s onwards, there was a powerful reaction to the sudden stream of 'godless' books appearing in both Latin and the vernacular' in his *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and Making of Modernity 1650- 1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 4.

Foligno.<sup>878</sup> His own *True Christianity* was influenced by a blend of mystical and alchemical writers. In reaction to what was characterised as Aristotelian scholastic theology, many Pietists turned to a Neoplatonic understanding of mystical theology as something which moved the heart rather than the mind. Mystical theology was ‘written by the hand of many holy souls through the impulse of God in many books’ and it was only through illumination via mystical experience that true knowledge of God and Scripture could be obtained.<sup>879</sup>

For radical Pietists this spirituality took an ecumenical turn. In light of their suffering in Germany many looked to those in France and Italy who had attempted to harness this inner spirituality and suffered persecution under the name of Quietism.<sup>880</sup> Spiritualists of the radical Reformation, such as Caspar Schwenckfeld, who had promoted a ‘living Christianity of the heart’, also greatly influenced radicals seeking an ecumenical stance.<sup>881</sup> As a result many Pietists developed religious fellowships which counteracted confessional identity; they referred to those who had similar religious yearning as a ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ regardless of their confessional affiliation.<sup>882</sup> One of the greatest influences on the Philadelphians was the radical Gottfried Arnold. His *History of Heretics* re-evaluated heretics throughout history as Christ’s true followers battling against the corrupt outward forms of religion.<sup>883</sup> Anabaptists, Spiritualists, Quakers, Behmenists, Quietists, Paracelsist physicians and women visionaries were all witness to this inner, heartfelt faith; but Schwenckfeld and the alchemist David Joris were the greatest examples of an inward Christianity which minimized differences of confessional stance.<sup>884</sup> Arnold was influenced by the works of one early Philadelphian, Thomas Bromley, whose *The Way to the Sabbath of Rest* he praised as being one of the ‘most complete descriptions one has of new birth and all of its steps from conversion to perfection’.<sup>885</sup> Arnold’s later work, *History and Description of Mystical Theology*, presented mysticks as visible everywhere in every

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<sup>878</sup> Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, p. 9; Eric Lund, ‘Tauler the Mystic’s Lutheran Admirers’, in Marc R. Forster and Benjamin K. Kaplan (eds.), *Piety and Family in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 9-27.

<sup>879</sup> Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>880</sup> W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 15-18, 296.

<sup>881</sup> Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism*, p. 17.

<sup>882</sup> F. Ernest Stoeffler, ‘Preface’, in Peter C. Erb (ed.), *Pietists: Selected Writings*, pp. ix-xi, p. x.

<sup>883</sup> James D. Smith III, ‘Gottfried Arnold Speaks English: A Radical Pietist Introduces His “Non-Partisan History” (1697)’, in Collins et al., (eds.), *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, pp. 59-74. For the reception of the work see C. Scott Dixon, ‘Faith and History on the Eve of Enlightenment: Ernst Salomon Cyprian, Gottfried Arnold, and the History of Heretics’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (2006), pp. 33-54.

<sup>884</sup> Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism*, p. 26.

<sup>885</sup> Quoted in Durnbaugh, ‘Jane Ward Leade (1624-1704) and the Philadelphians’, p. 139.

Church, even among the heterodox of earlier centuries.<sup>886</sup> It was a theology the Philadelphians echoed and supported, one which ‘transcended confessional boundaries, and also had a habit of making dogmatic confessional theologians uneasy on all sides’.<sup>887</sup> Coincidentally they also shared an admiration of Benedictine spirituality; Arnold published an edition of Gertrude More’s *Spiritual Exercises* as *Confessiones Amantis, Oder Heilige Liebes-Bekanntisse* in 1704.<sup>888</sup>

These were not the only contexts into which Lee placed Lead however. He also noted that she had been included by ‘a Judicious Writer in his *Characters* of the Mystical Authors, in a Book Printed this very Year in *Holland*’ and had been judged to contain ‘a share of the *Prophetical Spirit*’.<sup>889</sup> This writer, Pierre Poiret, was central to Lee’s understanding of what mystical theology was and who could be understood to be a mystick. Influenced by Poiret, Lee had travelled back to England to find Lead on the understanding that she was the latest example of an English mystick, and his communications with Poiret, as we will see, made this perfectly clear. In England Lead had little impact and few valued her works, but they were still printed because her ‘*Divine and Mystical Treatises*’ were valued in ‘*Foreign Nations, that desire them not a little, and know how to value them*’.<sup>890</sup> Poiret was part of what Peter C. Erb has referred to as the ‘Quietistic Pietists’, a group in which Quietism and Pietism mixed.<sup>891</sup> The doctrines of the Spaniard Miguel de Molinos which would come to be known as ‘Quietism’ had been fervently defended by his followers and attacked by Jesuits in Rome in the 1680s. In 1687 Molinos was brought before the Inquisition and confessed the errors contained in his works. In England Edward Stillingfleet presented Molinos as an example of a dangerous heretic who had gone beyond the doctrines of Christ, all the while framing this as an attack on Catholic infallibility. Molinos had managed to gain ‘*thousands* of Disciples in *Italy*, in the very Heart of the *Traditionary Church*’ through his teachings, which were nothing more than ‘*Enthusiasm*, or a Pretence to *Immediate Revelation*’. Rome had condemned Molinos’s belief in ‘*Simple, Pure, Infused and Perfect Contemplation*’ and the necessity of self-annihilation.<sup>892</sup> In the same year Gilbert Burnet elaborated on the role of mystical theology in Quietism and explained how the method of the ‘Mystical Divines’ could be traced through Pseudo-Dionysius, Bernard of

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<sup>886</sup> For more on uses of mystical theology in Pietism see Peter C. Erb, *Pietists, Protestants and Mysticism: The Use of Late Medieval Spiritual Texts in the Work of Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714)* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

<sup>887</sup> Euan K. Cameron, ‘Knowing in Pre- and Post-Reformation Worlds’, in Poor and Smith (eds.), *Mysticism and Reform*, pp. 29-48, p. 43.

<sup>888</sup> Gertrude More, *Confessiones Amantis, Oder Heilige Liebes-Bekanntisse* (Frankfurt, 1704).

<sup>889</sup> Lead, *The Wars of David*, unpaginated page entitled ‘Advertisement’.

<sup>890</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>891</sup> Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings*, p. 16.

<sup>892</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *A discourse concerning the nature and grounds of the certainty of faith in answer to J.S., his Catholick letters* (London, 1688), p. 110.

Clairvaux, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Thomas à Kempis, Teresa of Avila, Walter Hilton, Augustine Baker and Serenus Cressy before Molinos.<sup>893</sup> Molinos had ‘drunk in the principles of the *Contemplative Devotion in Spain*’ in veneration of Teresa of Avila, and his work had become so popular that nuns had set ‘aside their *Rosaries*, and other *Devotions*, and to give themselves much to the practice of *Mental prayer*’.<sup>894</sup> The Catholic Church had been forced to condemn them as a sect on accounts of the threat to public order. Quietism in France also proved controversial in the arrest of Madame Guyon in 1685 and the actions of her most famous disciple Archbishop François Fénelon, whom in 1697 found his own work, *Maxims of the Saints*, condemned by the Inquisition and the papacy. Mystical theology appeared to be spawning new heresies everywhere, and it is clear to see why opponents of the Philadelphians would not want a repeat of such in England.

Poiret is mainly remembered as being a follower of Madame Bourignon and thereafter Madame Guyon, both of whom he extensively promoted and published.<sup>895</sup> Undoubtedly the greatest support for the writings of both these women in came from the Scottish Episcopalian ‘Aberdeen Quietist group’ lead by brothers George and James Garden.<sup>896</sup> George Garden published a defence of Bourignon in 1699 in which he complained that she had been portrayed as:

An *Enthusiast*, an *Enchantress*, a *Blasphemer*, a *Seducer*, and the *Devil of a Saint*, that her Writings are said to be full of *Heresies*, *Delusions*, and *Errors*; and that by Persons of all Parties, *Papists*, *Protestants*, *Lutherans*, *Calvinists*, *Presbyterians*,

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<sup>893</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Three letters concerning the present state of Italy written in the year 1687* ([London?], 1688), p. 14.

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 22.

<sup>895</sup> For more on Guyon see Ronney Mourad and Dianne Guenin-Lelle, *The Prison Narratives of Jeanne Guyon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>896</sup> The Continental influences on this Scottish group have been explored in Geoffrey Rowell, ‘Scotland and the “mystical matrix” of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: an exploration of religious cross-currents’, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2014), pp. 128-44. Much more work needs to be done in uncovering the attitudes towards mystical theology in this group, a topic which has received very little attention. This will be somewhat rectified in the forthcoming work of Michael Riordan, whose recently completed Cambridge PhD thesis is entitled ‘Mysticism and prophecy in Scotland in the long eighteenth century’. Existing work on these figures includes George S. Rousseau, ‘Mysticism and Millenarianism: “Immortal Dr. Cheyne”’, in Richard Henry Popkin (ed.), *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought, 1650-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 81-126; *idem.*, *Enlightenment Borders: Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses: Medical, Scientific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); G. D. Henderson, *Mystics of the North East* (Aberdeen: Third Spalding Club, 1934); *idem.*, *Chevalier Ramsay* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952); *idem.*, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937); Robert Eddy, ‘Mysticism in eighteenth-century English literature’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis: Durham University, 1983), ch. 4. Henderson’s *Mystics* remains the most valuable resource for primary documents relating to the activities of James Keith, Andrew Ramsay, Lord Deskford, James Cunningham and George Garden. The beliefs of some of this group are outlined in Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, ch. 9.

*Episcopal Persons, Anabaptists, Quakers and even by the Preachers, and Writers, and Learned Men of the respective Parties.*<sup>897</sup>

He preferred to compare her to Christ, who had been hated by the learned of his time and called a blasphemer and ‘Perverter of the Law of God’. It was through Poiret that they made contact with Madame Guyon, who was residing in France. After this the circle focused on Guyon as an ‘illuminatissima femina’, labelled as such by Poiret. Bourignon offered the Garden brothers an alternative to the Church of Scotland; George had refused to swear the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, while James had refused to sign the Westminster Confession of Faith on the grounds of being an Episcopalian. What appealed to them was Guyon’s plea for a religious community which transcended confessional lines, something which would have proved a comfort to both Philadelphians, the Scottish circle, and the non-jurors they contained.<sup>898</sup>

The group were linked to the Philadelphians through the movements of the London based James Keith.<sup>899</sup> A non-juror like Lee, he had also studied at Leiden and was the London agent for the import and distribution of mystical texts from the Swiss Protestant bookselling firm of Wetstein in Amsterdam. Keith was a key circulator of these texts, along with George Cheyne, medical advisor to Episcopalian gentry man James Cunningham of Barns.<sup>900</sup> His manuscripts preserved in the Bodleian reveal him to be a passionate preserver of the works of John Pordage, whose original manuscripts he treasured with the aim of publishing accurately by ‘the Authors own hand & his true sense’.<sup>901</sup> Rawlinson noted that

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<sup>897</sup> George Garden, *An apology for M. Antonia Bourignon in four parts: to which are added two letters from different hands, containing remarks on the preface to The snake in the grass and Bourignonism detected: as also some of her own letters, whereby her true Christian spirit and sentiments are farther justified and vindicated, particularly as to the doctrine of the merits and satisfaction of Jesus Christ* (London, 1699), sigs. A2<sup>v</sup>-A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>898</sup> Mirjam de Baar, ‘Prophetess of God and prolific writer: Antoinette Bourignon and the reception of her writings’, in Susan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Janet F. van der Meulen and Pim van Oostrum (eds.), *“I Have heard about you”. Foreign Women’s Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), pp. 136-49, p. 144; idem., ‘Transgressing gender codes: Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon as contrasting examples’, in Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen and Marijke Huisman (eds.), *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England and Italy* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), pp. 143-52; Sarah Apetrei has recently noted that many of these circles were not only connected by their Behmenist and Quietist influences, but also by their non-juror principles; George Hickeys had translated works by Archbishop Fénelon, suggesting that something in mystical theology ‘struck a chord with High Church Spirituality’; Sarah Apetrei, ‘“Between the Rational and the Mystical”: The Inner Life and the Early English Enlightenment’, in Poor and Smith (eds.), *Mysticism and Reform*, pp. 198-219, p. 208.

<sup>899</sup> Apetrei argues Keith expounded the ‘spirit of Philadelphian mysticism’ in her *Women, Feminism and Religion*, p. 259.

<sup>900</sup> T.A. Birrell, ‘English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles- II’, *Downside Review*, Vol. 94 (1976), pp. 99-117, p. 111.

<sup>901</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. A. 405, fol. 232. Rawl A. 404 is an incomplete copy of the same treatise. References are given to Angela of Foligno, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Boehme and the Flemish Chemist Jan Baptist van Helmont in the margins of the text.

Keith was ‘a Philadelphian and a Mystick’ and the other manuscripts which come from Keith’s library include works by Poiret, Maurus de l’Enfant Jésus, Prior to the Carmelite Nuns of Bordeaux, and Blossius.<sup>902</sup> T. A. Birrell has asserted that Keith’s library contained manuscripts of works by Augustine Baker and Gertrude More, suggesting a very far reaching collection concerning mystical theology and a shared interest with Francis Lee and Richard Roach.<sup>903</sup>

The fact that the Philadelphians were influenced by Quietism was no great secret, but was rather boasted about by Francis Lee. The ecumenical impulse towards Catholic works was visible in Lee’s assertion that the Philadelphians were not ‘without their Friends in Roman Catholick Countries, as well as Protestant’.<sup>904</sup> France, despite the severity of Louis XIV and the governing clergy, could not ‘put a stop to the Growth of that Mustard-seed, which is encreasing into a Tree, that is to overshadow the whole Earth’. Such a seed was also to be found in Italy, which was ‘the Scene of some very Extraordinary Thing, within a little space of time’. This is likely another reference to the Quietist movement and the works of Molinos and Guyon. Christians were being moved by the ‘extraordinary Motions of the Divine Spirit’, but so too were the Turks and Jews, extending the scope of the movement significantly. All these groups had been charged with enthusiasm by those who were ashamed to ‘own the Pure Teachings of the Spirit of Christ, which in all Times *entring* [sic] *into Holy Souls, makes them Friends of God, and Prophets*’.<sup>905</sup> Many in the Catholic Church were therefore ‘*Ting’d with the very same Principles upon which this Society is Founded*’, especially the Quietists and Pierre de Bérulle. Bérulle, who had been a statesman and cardinal in France, was especially important as proof that ‘*the clearest Heads have fallen into this Way, and that the Wisest Ministers of State have not thought it of such pernicious Consequence (as some do vainly surmise) to the Civil Government*’.<sup>906</sup>

The Philadelphians therefore had connections to both Pietist and Quietist circles in the late seventeenth century. They were part of a wider movement which valued mystical theology as the most valuable form of inner spirituality. Lee and Roach directly placed the experiences of Lead into these wider contexts; spiritual awakenings all over the world validated Lead’s own experiences and writings. The ecstatic experiences of Pietist women

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<sup>902</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. C 858, D. 42, 43 & 44; Rawlinson makes such a note in Rawl A. 405.

<sup>903</sup> Birrell, ‘English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles- II’, p. 112. Sadly Birrell does not provide any references to exactly which manuscripts in the Bodleian Library were once owned by Keith. The Rawlinson manuscripts C. 581 containing More’s *Confessiones Amantis* and C. 460 containing Baker’s *Vindication* show no obvious signs of Keith’s ownership.

<sup>904</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 13.

<sup>905</sup> [Francis Lee], *A letter to some divines, concerning the question, whether God since Christ’s ascension, doth any more reveal himself to mankind by the means of divine apparitions?* (London, 1695), sigs. A2<sup>r</sup>- A4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>906</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 13.

were noted with excitement in their communications, and Quietism was proving that even in Catholicism true spirituality was breaking through institutional barriers. They were an amalgamation of both home-grown and Continental enthusiasms for mystical theology; taking inspiration from the Benedictines, the radicals of the 1640s, and the ‘Quietistic Pietists’ they communicated with abroad. These links would inevitably lead to their downfall under the mounting public criticism levelled at them. Before looking at this however, we can gain an even deeper understanding of exactly what the Philadelphians understood as mystical theology by exploring references to it made by their two main leaders; Lee and Roach. It is to Lee that we first turn.

### **Lee and Poiret: Printing Mysticks**

Much of Lee’s understanding of mystical theology and mysticks came from Poiret’s *La Theologie Réelle* (1700). At the back of this work was an alphabetical catalogue of writers who had written on ‘des matières Mystiques ou Spirituelles’, the more important writers being indicated with a star.<sup>907</sup> The mysticks given a star included Continental writers such as Angela of Foligno, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena and Henry Suso. Starred references were also given to Gertrude More, ‘Augustin Backer, Sancta Sophia’, and Benet of Canfield, as well as Boehme, Guyon, Antoinette Bourignon and revealingly, Poiret himself. Mysticks were no longer writers from the past, but rather were alive and working in the present. The ecumenical Pietist impulse allowed Catholic and Protestant authors to be considered mysticks alongside each other as Christian writers of mystical works. The list also featured a reference to one ‘Jeanne Leade’, placing Lead firmly within the canon of mysticks. She was presented as another example of the strong English (notably Catholic) tradition found previously in Baker, More and Canfield. Poiret also placed her alongside Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Bridget of Sweden in a tradition of female mysticks and noted that:

Those who have read the new writings of the English Dame called Jeanne Leado, currently still alive, talk about a way to judge that they are entirely in character according to the latter, that is to say, they are filled with salutary instructions and lights, as well as divine revelations for the upcoming restoration of the Church by the renewal of Christian life & the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of the wonders of His Kingdom.<sup>908</sup>

Poiret, as well as the Philadelphians, clearly placed Lead in a long tradition of female mystical experience, viewing her as the latest in a long succession of holy women.

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<sup>907</sup> Pierre Poiret, *La theologie réelle, vulgairement ditte la theologie germanique* (Amsterdam, 1700).

<sup>908</sup> Pierre Poiret, *Lettre Sur les principes & les caractères des principaux auteurs Mystiques & Spirituels des derniers siècles* in idem., *La theologie réelle, vulgairement ditte la theologie germanique*, p. 50.

According to Poiret, those who held this opinion of Lead ‘are neither less enlightened [...] nor in small numbers’ and he directed the reader towards her *Revelation of Revelations* and two diaries entitled *The Fountain of Gardens*, published in London and Amsterdam since 1694.<sup>909</sup> Lead and the Philadelphian cause were directly compared to Augustine Baker and Gertrude More by Lee elsewhere, where he stated that the Philadelphians, like the Benedictines in their struggles against the Jesuits, simply wanted to be allowed to follow God’s will. The Church at the time of the Apostles would not have questioned Lead, Baker or More. Rather they would have celebrated them as having the gift of the Holy Spirit and rejoiced in the varieties of ways it moved them to speak and write. It was only through the decline of Christianity into schism and infighting that these gifts had lost value, but mysticks like Lead would rightly be reinstated to high praise after the restoration of true ancient Christianity.<sup>910</sup> The Philadelphian cause was merged with that of the Benedictines explicitly when Lee described both Lutherans and Catholics as withdrawing from the world and worldly authority. This practice was best seen in the Catholic Church, where Baker and More protested against the ‘servile obedience which the Jesuits generally required’. All of these groups thus:

Explicitly declare that the true object of obedience is God alone, and that none can live in true obedience without attending to the internal Divine call, whatever their superiors may persuade to the contrary, or their spiritual directors dictate. And herein we cannot but concur with them; yet do not for this think that we separate from the church whereof we were before members, any more than they did separate from theirs, unless that church that claims us should either deny this Divine call or prohibit the obedience to it.<sup>911</sup>

Poiret and Lee had a personal interest in influencing the reading habits of Lead, a fact which can be understood in light of her position within their canon of mysticks. In letters to Poiret, Lee revealed that the works of mystical theology he sent were being read to her. The first was Boehme’s *The Threefold Life*, apparently translated by Poiret himself. Also read to Lead was the ‘greater part’ of the life of Elizabeth of Hungary, an account of the ‘holy youth’ Wesner, and the life of Gaston Jean Baptiste de Renty, the last having ‘already some time translated into our language’, by Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, despite him being ‘a

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<sup>909</sup> Ibid., p. 51. My thanks go to Natasha Anson for translating the sections of Poiret’s work reproduced and discussed here.

<sup>910</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, pp. 194, 218.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid., pp. 217-18. Lee went to great pains to stress that none of these groups promoted ‘levelling all communions’ and that the Philadelphians had little problem with the Church of England, which was less excessive in its censorship than the Lutheran or Catholic Churches.



most bitter enemy of the Church of Rome'.<sup>912</sup> Both Lee and Poiret were in no doubt that these works:

Will through the watering of the Holy Spirit, produce much fruit in this age; and that they are in truth the most solid apology for mystical theology. Therefore we render thanks to the God of Lights that he has given such heroic examples to these latter days, and that he inspired the authors of these Memoirs to compile them.<sup>913</sup>

Despite these works being a 'solid apology' however, Lee suggested that 1702 was a year of continued struggle. 'We are fallen upon very difficult times, in which every one wishes to be, and to appears to be, a judge' he lamented, 'and this, before that infallible judge comes who will reveal all the hidden things in the hearts of his saints, discriminating all that is mixed, and separating the wheat from the chaff'.<sup>914</sup> Lead and mystical theology were not as enthusiastically received in England as elsewhere.

Finally, Lee was involved in a joint venture from 1700 onwards with Poiret and various others to print works of mystical theology for the 'advancement of the most ancient and universal religion, as professed by Christ and his apostles'.<sup>915</sup> He noted that there was very little encouragement of such books in England and that works of mystical theology were known to only a few and owned by an even smaller group. Because of this the enterprise was likely to be of great expense at first, both due to the number of people that would be needed for translations and publication, and the fact that the books were unlikely to bring immediate return on investment. To counteract this Lee proposed to repay any money deposited by giving the donator the subsequent published versions of mystical texts up to the value of their deposit. If, in the event that the publishing of these works brought a profit, it was to be used towards charitable causes or the continued printing of more mystical texts, which would be regulated by trustees. These publications were not to be rushed

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<sup>912</sup> Dr. Williams Library MS. 186.18, fol. 8. The reference to 'Werner' is unidentified beyond 'holy youth'. It could be a reference to Werner of Oberwesel (1271-1287), whose murder was blamed on the Jewish population at the time. The fact that Werner only lived 16 years could qualify the 'holy youth' description. Burnet, while chaplain to Charles II, published *The mystery of iniquity unveiled* (London, 1673) which linked the characteristics of the Pope with the Antichrist, the whore and Babylon, while also attacking nonconformity; see Johnston, 'The Anglican Apocalypse in Restoration England', p. 486.

<sup>913</sup> Dr. Williams Library MS. 186.18, fol. 8. Lead was subsequently to write to Poiret and 'express to you by letter her opinion hereupon'.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid., fol. 8-9.

<sup>915</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 237. This printing venture flourished in the activities of Gerhard Tersteegen, who printed many works by Catholic authors based on works recommended by Poiret in this catalogue; Douglas H. Shantz, 'Pietism as a Translation Movement', in idem., (ed.), *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660- 1800*, pp. 319-47, p. 337. See also W. R. Ward, 'Mysticism and Revival: The Case of Gerhard Tersteegen', in Jane Garnett and Colin Matthew (eds.), *Revival and Religion since 1700* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 41-58, where Ward refers to him as 'the prince of Protestant mystics' (p. 41).

however, and the works were to be ‘printed carefully, on a fine paper, and with a very good letter’.<sup>916</sup>

This library of texts gives another example of the substantial canon of mysticks, both Protestant and Catholic. The ‘ancient Christian Mysticks’ such as Macarius and Nilus of Sinai were to be ‘set forth in the English tongue very advantageously, with proper annotations’.<sup>917</sup> With these would be printed the ‘Heathen Mysticks’ and the remaining writings of the ‘true ancient Jewish Cabals’, the works of which would be translated into English or Latin, or both if possible. The ‘Christian Mysticks of the middle age, and the moderns’ were also included, and Lee makes special reference to those that are out of print. As these works are of an ‘established character’, they would be faithfully and correctly reprinted. Although Lee does not elaborate on exactly what works he is referring to in this sense, we can assume it is in reference to works such as Catherine of Siena’s *The Orchard of Syon* (1529), the works of Ruysbroeck and Richard Whitford’s *Pilgrimage of Perfection* (1531), as many of these works could be found in the libraries of his close friends, particularly the Reverend Edward Waple who also owned copies of Hilton’s *Scale*, Cressy’s *Sancta Sophia* and the work of Piere Poiret in the form of *Theologie Reelle* (1700).<sup>918</sup>

Lee also held what he deemed the ‘English Mysticks’ in very high regard. His proposal outlined:

That our English Mysticks of the former ages as many as can be found, whether in print or in manuscript, that are of value, shall be diligently revised, and methodised in convenient portable volumes: and so as they may come at a most easy rate to the buyers, considering the great dearness of many of them at present.<sup>919</sup>

The works of these writers were to be revised and published in small portable volumes for ease of transport and apparent ease on the purse strings, as Lee noted many of them were costly, especially in manuscript form. The two main objectives of the enterprise were to improve the quality of the translations of the works while also significantly improving access to these texts. Lee was clearly aiming to expose a much larger audience to the works of mystical theology than had previously existed, showing his confidence in the fact that these works, if made in affordable and accessible copies, would prove to be incredibly popular. Similar action was to be taken with the ‘approved writers’ of mystical theology in Italian, French, High Dutch, and Flemish, which were to be ‘translated, revised, and methodised after the same manner, in portable volumes’. It is here that we witness the

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<sup>916</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 237.

<sup>917</sup> Ibid. The spelling of ‘mystick’ over that of ‘mystic’ presented in Walton’s *Notes* has been verified by viewing the original manuscript in Doctor William’s Library.

<sup>918</sup> Birrell, ‘English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles- II’, p. 106.

<sup>919</sup> Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*, p. 238.

origins of mystical theology as a Christian, rather than a confessionalized, tradition of writers.

Directly after mentioning these ‘English Mystics of the former ages’ Lee discussed the work of ‘many originals’ that were recently deceased or still alive, whose work would also be printed with some account of the authors and any curious passages relating to them. In these works would also be added any passages concerning the ‘opening of the Archetypal and Angelical worlds’. Such a reference clearly included the works of John Pordage, Jane Lead and perhaps others such as Thomas Bromley. His insistence that Lead, Pordage and others should be included in this canon suggests he saw the Philadelphians as the English branch of a much larger ‘mystical network’.<sup>920</sup> His attempts to influence and mould Jane Lead into this image of a mystick author is clear through his defences of mystical theology and Lead, as well as his activities with Poiret. This adds substantial weight to the argument that it was this association with mystical theology that led to the downfall of the Philadelphian Society, as leading Philadelphians were consciously attempting to present themselves as mysticks. We find further evidence of this self-fashioning in the writings of Richard Roach, the other leader of the group.

### **Richard Roach and the Philadelphian Past**

Although Lee framed the Philadelphian Society as part of a wider ‘mystical network’ and insisted Pordage had changed from his earlier period of radicalism, he did not expressly make the claim that mysticks had played an integral role in the formation of the Society. He had insisted that those sectarian elements Dodwell had complained about had been expunged and we must keep in mind his earlier comment about Pordage that ‘whatever he might have been in 1654’ was not what he was in 1674 when Lead cohabited with him. Richard Roach however had no problem linking mystical theology with the earlier group and established a direct continuation into the works of Lead. According to him the original members had been part of a ‘Society of Spiritual People who for about 50 years had met together after the

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<sup>920</sup> Many Philadelphian works circulated in manuscript form and it is possible that Lee wanted those published as well. Accounts of Ann Bathurst’s visions were particularly popular. Aside from the manuscripts in the Bodleian (Rawl D. 1262, 1263 and 1338), manuscript copies of her works can be found in Chetham Library, Manchester (Mun.A.7.64) among the papers of John Byrom, in the National Records of Scotland (CH12/20/9), and as far as St. Petersburg in the Library of Russian Academy of Sciences (MS Q. 472 and Q. 538). For comparisons between the Oxford and St. Petersburg copies see Leena Kahlas-Tarkka and Matti Kilpio, ‘*O Thou Sea of Love: Oxford and St. Petersburg manuscripts of Ann Bathurst’s religious visions*’, in Leena Kahlas-Tarkka and Matti Kilpio (eds.), *Western European Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Russia: Delving into the Collections of the Libraries of St Petersburg* (VARIENG eSeries Volume 9) [[http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/09/kahlas-tarkka\\_kilpio/](http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/09/kahlas-tarkka_kilpio/), accessed 30 July 2015]

primitive way of Attendance or waiting for the Holy Spirit, to Assist & Actuate them in Prayer or speaking to Edification of each other'.<sup>921</sup> Roach noted that:

These are supposed at first to have had their Rise, at least in part, from some English Mysticks, with whose writings they were Conversant & afterwards from a fresh Gale & excitement of the holy Spirit for Revival of the work of God & Preparation of his Kingdom. This first Experienced by Mrs Pordage the Wife of Dr John Pordage Author of the *Theologia Mystica*: who married her for her Excellent Gift; & became himself Partaker of it. After this Mr Tho: Bromely, Author of the way to the Sabbath of Rest, perceiving There was a power & presence of God more than ordinary with them, joynd himself to (them), with others. Also Mrs Jane Lead Author of the *Heavenly Cloud* and the *Revelation of Revelations* came in.<sup>922</sup>

The origins of the Philadelphians were traced directly back to the works of English mysticks. Exactly which authors this refers to, it is impossible to say, but based on what Roach mentions elsewhere we can speculate that this is reference to one or a combination of Walter Hilton, Benet of Canfield, Augustine Baker, Francis Rous, Peter Sterry and John Everard.<sup>923</sup> Although the most importance is given to the role of the Holy Spirit, which became a 'fresh Gale' for the early members, it is important to note that Roach stressed they were heavily influenced by these other sources.

Elsewhere in a different account of the rise of the Society Roach revealed more of his understanding of the origins of the Philadelphians. There he stressed the influence of the 'Mysticks in all Parts, & of all Denominations', who had overlooked the 'Particularities of their own Church' and the 'Outward Unified Form', choosing to keep to the 'Interior or Spiritual Way'. These writers were in 'Harmony & Unity' with each other, despite being from 'Externally Different Denominations', whereas those that took the 'Outward Way & Forms' suffered from 'Disunity & Disharmony'.<sup>924</sup> Roach stressed that it was from this 'Inward Mystical Way' that the Philadelphia Society had its origins, before again explaining that it was replaced by a 'fresh Concurrence & Holy Gale of a Divine Life & Power opening first & Principally in Mrs Pordage'.<sup>925</sup> In this account it was not just English mysticks that Roach claimed were influential on Pordage and his circle, but ones of all nationalities and religions. At one stage he made this point succinctly and clearly, stating that the Philadelphians 'own all the Mystick Writers, in the inward way & conduct of the soul by the Holy Spirit'.<sup>926</sup> Linking Jane Lead to mystical theology was also expressly

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<sup>921</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 833, fol. 82<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid.

<sup>923</sup> Roach, *The Great Crisis*, pp. 106, 170. Roach includes all these authors as 'English mysticks'. To go beyond this is pure speculation.

<sup>924</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 833, fol. 63<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>925</sup> Ibid., fols. 63<sup>v</sup>- 64<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid., fol. 86<sup>r</sup>.

expounded in Roach's letter to Archbishop Tenison. When asked whether the revelations of Lead in *The Fountain of Gardens* should be seen as true, Roach replied:

These two books are but part of that persons writings & can be little understood being most deep & mysticall, without the perusal & understanding of the others, which are more introductory, nor can these others be well understood but by such as have knowledge of the Mystical Divinity, which is by most neglected; yet will be found when thoroughly search'd into to contain the most sublime truths, & the most spirituall part of the Christian Religions; being the manifestations, experiences & entertainment, of such as have lived a more retired & abstracted life, devote to God & more conversant with him than those of the mind & outward Life.<sup>927</sup>

Lead's writings were framed by Roach as part of a much larger Christian spiritual practice of 'Mysticall Divinity', one that included a range of authors who had followed an inner life devoted to God and recorded their spiritual experiences. Roach's own poem, Solomon's Porch, which featured in the first volume of Lead's diary, was defended alongside her writings in the *Theosophical Transactions* as being 'very liable to be misunderstood by such as are not acquainted with the more Mystical and Spiritual part of Theology'.<sup>928</sup>

More than any other Philadelphian, Roach gave a detailed account of how mysticks and mystical theology fitted into the millennial beliefs of the group. To understand this requires a detailed analysis of Roach's final works, *The Great Crisis* (1725) and *The Imperial Standard* (1727). In *The Imperial Standard* Roach defined mystical theology as different from 'Humane Reason and Learning'. It was the illumination of the Holy Spirit, which brought the soul to contemplation, union and communion with God. It also contained 'the Rules, Doctrines, and Experiences of the most Advance'd and Spiritual Christians both Antient and Modern [sic], in their Process towards Perfection'. Roach described mystical theology as 'the same in the Writers of all Ages, however differing in External Profession or Denomination'.<sup>929</sup> For Roach, it was a universal Christian tradition which stretched back to the time of Christ and one which ignored the outward confessional stance of the author. All mysticks were linked together through the movement and power of the Holy Spirit within them and all communed with God through the rules and doctrines of mystical theology.

Roach's *The Great Crisis* expounded a full historical apology for mystical theology. In it he argued that 'Virgin Wisdom' had always been the superior Bride of Christ, and the Church was secondary. The Church had lost its way around the time of Constantine, whereby the 'Spirit of this world' distracted the Church from its original 'Spiritual Work and Principles'. The Church began to move away from respecting the powers of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>927</sup> Lambeth Palace Library MS 942/141, fol. 3.

<sup>928</sup> *Theosophical Transactions*, p. 100.

<sup>929</sup> Roach, *The Imperial Standard*, p. 304.

and instead began to consider it as enthusiasm. In the ensuing centuries mystical theology was separated from 'External Humane-Rational', a product of the fall, which dominated the Church. 'To this day', Roach complained, 'the External and Humane-Rational Systems of Divinity are set at such a Distance from the Spiritual, that the Latter is not so much as understood'.<sup>930</sup> It was the devolution from pure Christianity and an obsession with worldly interests that had caused the Church to lose sight of the true value of mystical theology. Yet among these worldly and rational Christians were those who had preserved the 'true Primitive Spiritual Principles and Maxims of Christianity'. If it was not for these select few these principles would have been entirely lost, being preserved through those who existed in isolation, practicing methods of divine contemplation and union with God:

This is what is call'd the Mystical Divinity; Uniform and Consistent in its Ground, and Harmonizing with itself, (and the Pure Gospel Spirit,) in all Ages, and in all Countries; and even in all Authors treating of it, however otherwise differing in Persuasion, or Religious Profession; and free from the Disputes and Wranglings with which the Common Systems and Controversial Schemes in Divinity so much abound.<sup>931</sup>

This was the very marrow of Christian spirituality, so deep that it was out of reach for ordinary Christians who held on to their external and outward forms and viewed it as speculation or 'mere Enthusiasm'.

Much of this theology had been cultivated in the 'Hermitical State' in the cloisters of the Catholic Church. The Reformation, with its concern for reforming the external part of religion, 'let go and lost much of the spiritual'. It was kept private within the Catholic Church until Miguel de Molinos had brought it into public view in his *Spiritual Guide*. The rise of the Quietists produced many 'great and surprizing [sic] Effects' and had inspired many to argue that to deny mystical theology was to deny and reject 'the Principles of Primitive Christianity, and the Spirituality of the Gospel itself'. If France endured with this protest, and reformed their Church to restore mystical theology and the role of the Holy Spirit, then Roach predicted that they would outstrip some Protestant Churches which had 'sunk so far from them, and from the Purity of their First Reformation'.<sup>932</sup> Luther himself, though not skilled in mystical theology, had recommended it through his approval of the *Theologia Germanica*. Lutheran Pietist Philipp Jakob Spener had also recommended it,

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<sup>930</sup> Roach, *The Great Crisis*, pp. 101-2, quote on p. 102.

<sup>931</sup> Ibid., p. 104. Roach's *The Imperial Standard* defined mystical theology as 'the Inward Operation of the Holy Spirio [sic] upon the Soul, rooting out the most Secret Vices and Corruptions, and carrying it on in the Perfective Part, to Divine Contemplation, Union, and Communion with God'. It was characterized as 'the Rules, Doctrines, and Experience of the most Advanc'd and Spirtual Christians both Antient and Modorn [sic], it their Process towards Perfection. It is as to the Substance of it the Same in all Writers of all Ages, however differing in External Profession or Denomination' (p. 304).

<sup>932</sup> Roach, *The Great Crisis*, pp. 105-6.

along with the works of Tauler and Thomas à Kempis. Roach recommended these works, so respected by Luther at the dawn of the Reformation, to still be useful. Kempis was especially praised as ‘the best introduction to this Mystical Way’.<sup>933</sup>

At this point Roach’s account broke new ground. He began recommending several other works by ‘well-established’ mysticks such as Augustine of Hippo and Macarius of Egypt. Yet the next names in the list were Peter Sterry, Henry More and John Norris, all connected ‘Cambridge Platonists’. Roach began to expound a new canon of mysticks which were not simply authors from the past, but more recent ones. Henry Scourgal’s *Life of God in the Soul of Man* was recommended alongside Matthew Hale’s *Contemplations, Moral and Divine*.<sup>934</sup> These English mysticks were then joined by Johann Arndt, ‘the great Reviver of Primitive Christianity’ and Madame Bourignon. These were all examples of what Roach terms ‘modern Mysticks’, writers who showed the ‘Preparatory Powers of the Kingdom breaking forth among the Waiters for it, within the last Century’. These moderns may be held with suspicion by those who had read ‘the Elder Mysticks’, as the latter had been so cautious and private in their experiences. Roach explained that the ‘newer’ mysticks had experiences which ‘the Light and Power of the Latter Day have open’d more freely’ and despite this they ‘proceed upon the same Principles with them’. The extraordinary visions, experiences and outbursts of the ‘newer’ mysticks were a product of the ever growing power of the Holy Spirit moving those who were anticipating the approach of Christ’s kingdom, which was closer and closer to hand. The ‘elder mysticks’ had not experienced such because they had not lived at the time of this new dispensation, but if they had, Roach had no doubts that their accounts would have been exactly the same as modern writers.<sup>935</sup> In this we see Quietism and Pietism linked to mystical theology in a very overt way; like both those movements, which had reacted against scholastic thinking and corrupt outward forms of religion, mysticks were those of all denominations who had realized this and turned inwards towards the ‘Pure Gospel Spirit’. All these mysticks were proof of the historical ‘Opposition then of the Systematic and Rational to the Superior-Intellectual or Mystical Divine’. Mystical theology was the superior Christian path to understanding the ‘Spiritual Part of Religion’, where knowledge of God could be found not outwardly, but in the ‘Inward Sphere of the New Man’.<sup>936</sup>

Roach acknowledged that his account of the ‘Elder Mysticks’ had been ‘receiv’d from Hand of a Learned and Pious Friend’, which was undoubtedly Poiret’s *Bibliotheca*

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<sup>933</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>934</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>935</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>936</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

*Mysticorum Selecta* (1708). Roach recounted this in his ‘Account and Catalogue of the Spiritual or Mystical Writers, in the several Ages of the Church’. Included in the list were early Latin and Greek Church writers, monastics such as Benedict of Nursia, fourteenth-century figures Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Harphius and Suso, English writers Hilton, Baker and Benet of Canfield, and the Spanish examples of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Lesser known ‘little Treatises’ revealed how expansive the Christian canon of mystical works had become by the time Roach wrote, now including German Carthusian John Justus of Landsberg, Italian Theatine Lorenzo Scupoli, Capuchin John Evangelista, and the Spanish Jesuit Alonso Rodriguez. Roach clearly drew heavily on Poiret’s account, but added his own preferences to his version of the history of mystical theology. Roach’s fascination with female spirituality was obvious when he emphasised the ‘Famous Inlighten’d Virgins’ which included Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, Gertrude the Great, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Angela of Foligno, Hildegard of Bingen and Elisabeth of Schönau. Roach also made special mention of the Benedictines, describing Gertrude More’s works as being ‘full of Breathings of Divine Love, and Interpres’d with Rapt of Divine Poetry’. Bourignon and Guyon were mentioned, but Roach was curiously silent about Jane Lead, who does not appear in this section. Roach also proudly boasted of the high character of English works of mystical theology, listing John Everard, Francis Rous, Thomas Bromley and several Platonists including John Worthington and John Norris. As well as giving special attention to Bromley, who was directly compared to Thomas à Kempis, Roach also chose to highlight the role of Everard, whose works contained ‘very Deep things in Divinity’ and set ‘the History and Mystery of Scripture in a clear light’.<sup>937</sup>

Roach’s *The Great Crisis*, one of the final works of the original Philadelphians, highlighted the literary influences that were at work among their members. Roach’s understanding of mystical theology was heavily influenced by Poiret and Arnold’s accounts of its history. Like Francis Lee, he clearly saw the Philadelphians as part of a wider movement or revival of ancient Christian spirituality which Pietists and Quietists were also a part of. From the very beginning of the group, when Roach had to defend Lead’s works to Archbishop Tenison, he did so by linking her to mystical theology. Mystical theology was the ideological umbrella under which these groups found common ground and strengthened their spiritual legitimacy through associate and identification with it. We find evidence of this in Roach’s recommendation of Molinos’s *Spiritual Guide*, the works of Guyon, Bourignon and Poiret’s *Divine Oeconomy* as proof of the validity of the movement.<sup>938</sup> Yet it

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<sup>937</sup> Ibid., pp. 165-71.

<sup>938</sup> Poiret defined ‘mystic theology’ as loving ‘God with all our Heart, with all our Soul, with all our Mind, and with all our Strength; and that we endeavour also to bring our Neighbours to the same’, suggesting a wider drive to inspire as many to follow mystical theology as possible. Poiret also



was not only Continental influences acting on Roach, for his account revealed the result of the engagement with mystical theology in England that had occurred across the seventeenth century. As well as the writings of John Everard, Francis Rous and the Cambridge Platonists, Roach also mentioned the editions of Capuchin John Evangelist and Lorenzo Scupoli, both of which were translated and published by the Benedictines Peter Salvin, Arthur Crowder and Thomas Vincent in the 1650s. The Philadelphians were therefore influenced by the works of mystical theology published in England throughout the seventeenth century and then further encouraged to see these works as part of a much larger international network. In Roach's writings, like in the publishing plans of Francis Lee, we see that the evolution of a Christian canon of writers of mystical theology labelled as mysticks was largely complete. An incredibly detailed canon of Christian mysticks had cemented itself firmly in the minds of those wishing to study and practice mystical theology. The seventeenth century had slowly gestated this concept, and the birth of it was witnessed in the Philadelphians.<sup>939</sup>

### **The Downfall of the Philadelphian Society**

By 1703 the Philadelphian Society had established themselves in a number of different circles. They had aligned themselves with the millennial beliefs of Thomas Beverley and believed that they were awaiting the arrival of the Philadelphian age. They also identified with Pietists and Quietists on the Continent as part of a larger mystical network of those suffering in preparation for the second coming, believing that their inner revelations and experiences were proof of the imminence of this new age. Mystical theology was an irenic spiritual doctrine; true believers were found among all confessions. As we have already noted, Jane Lead was linked into this wider notion of mystical theology from the very inception of the Philadelphian Society; she was an Englishwoman experiencing a spiritual

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described it as cleansing and purifying the inner faculties, becoming fit to receive divine love through contemplation and prayer, receiving 'Lights, Joys and other effects of Reciprocal Love and Eternal Delight'. See Pierre Poiret, *The Oeconomy of Sin: Wherein are explain'd, Its Possibility, its Futurition, its Nature, its Event and Effects, both in Angels and in Man: And wherein also is demonstrated and maintain'd, The Truth of Original Sin* (London, 1713), pp. 107-8.

<sup>939</sup> William Law, influenced by the Philadelphians, the Scottish Quietist group and the circles of Continental Pietists, is perhaps best remembered as evidence for the establishment of this canon. He certainly owned the manuscripts of Francis Lee and was interested in anything connected to Jacob Boehme. For more on these connections see Walton (ed.), *Notes and Materials*. In print Law was accused of 'visionary enthusiasm' by following 'Jacob Bhemen [sic], P. Pordage, and Mrs. Lead, and other Writers of that Stamp' in Joseph Trapp, *A Reply to Mr. Law's Earnest and Serious Answer (As it is Called) to Dr. Trapp's Discourse of the Folly, Sin, and Danger of Being Righteous Over-much* (London, 1741), p. 121. Law would reply that of Pordage and Lead he knew 'very little of, yet as much as I desire to know', but vehemently defended Jacob Boehme, see William Law, *An Appeal To all that Doubt, or Disbelieve The Truths of the Gospel Whether They be Deist, Arians, Socinians, or Nominal Christians in which The True Grounds and Reasons of the whole Christian Faith and Life are plainly and fully demonstrated* (London, 1756), p. 313. This suggests that associating with the Philadelphians was automatically inviting smears of enthusiasm.

outpouring which was concurrent in all countries and denominations. The attacks of Henry Dodwell and Edward Stephens suggest that early criticism of the group identified mystical theology as a Catholic and Quietist enthusiasm and a danger to the established Church. The Philadelphians therefore had an uphill struggle to convince their critics that they were not enthusiasts, crypto Catholics, or indeed a schismatic group seeking to weaken the authority of the Church of England.

The deaths of both Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst in 1704 has often been cited as one of the contributing factors to the Philadelphians' demise. While obviously Lead was central to the group and the Philadelphians largely orbited around her, the fact remains that the Philadelphians retreated from view in 1703, a year earlier. But what exactly had caused them to retreat? Clues can be found in the Philadelphians' replies to their critics. One of the most immediate problems was their association with the Quakers. Part of the problem seems to have been that they did not expressly deny that they shared much of their spirituality with them. A letter sent to the Philadelphians, possibly by Charles Leslie under the pseudonym 'Philaethes', revealed that many around London had read the *Theosophical Transactions* from 'this new Sect with a hard Name' and wondered about their beliefs.<sup>940</sup> Many wanted to know how they differed from the Church of England, and more importantly, the Quakers. Leslie had attempted to explain that they did not 'place Religion in Thouing and Theeing', but was apparently rendered mute when asked if they shared the Quaker practices of the inner light and private spirit of revelation.<sup>941</sup> Lee replied that they did indeed share the 'Internal Principal of the Light within' with the Quakers, but quickly reinforced the fact that both Philadelphians and Quakers shared much of their spirituality with the Church of England, which itself had been unfairly represented as having 'little Favourers of this internal Principal of a Spiritual and Divine Light communicated to the Soul'.<sup>942</sup> This confusion of the differences between Quakers and Philadelphians would have only been furthered by most of Jane Lead's work being printed by the prominent Quaker Sowle family, who also published other mystical works such as Francis Rous's *The Heavenly Academie*.<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>940</sup> Leslie often used the name 'Philaethes' in his anonymous publications, and his general interest in the Philadelphians certainly suggests it was him writing the letter. The phrasing asks the Philadelphians to 'distinctly state and explain these things' for 'their own satisfaction, and the satisfaction of others', suggesting the writer did not view himself as one of their supporters.

<sup>941</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>943</sup> Sarah Apetrei has noted that Roach's diaries reveal that he believed the gift of revelation to be given in former times to those who 'Rant & Quake', suggesting he saw the Quakers and 'Ranters' as Philadelphian ancestors, see her *Women, Feminism and Religion*, p. 201. The other common denominator was a shared interest in Boehme, see Ariel Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2005), pp. 191-223. Francis Rous, *Academia coelestis: the heavenly university: or, the highest school, Where alone is that Highest Teaching. The Teaching of the Heart* (London, 1702).

The position of nonconformists had been perilous since the Restoration of Charles II and the rise of the Cavalier Parliament. When James II declared toleration for Catholics and nonconformists in 1687, nonconformist places of worship were attacked and destroyed, with similar occurrences after the death of William III in 1702.<sup>944</sup> Parliaments from 1660 onward warned that empowering sectarianism through toleration could ultimately end in popery.<sup>945</sup> Verbal abuse, harassment, violence and arson were commonplace experiences of nonconformists after 1689, who were also regularly attacked from the pulpit by High Church Anglicans.<sup>946</sup> ‘Opposition, & violence, from the rude Multitude’ was common at Philadelphian meetings, and suggests that they were identified with Quakers in the minds of many.<sup>947</sup> The ‘New Sect of Philadelphians’, Leslie would later reveal, were thought to be of the same stock as the Quakers, so much so that Quakers could ‘hardly Distinguish them from their own’.<sup>948</sup>

Their approach to mystical theology must also have been held suspect after several Quaker writers’ comments on the topic in 1678. Such works reveal why Francis Lee was unable to distance the Philadelphians from the Quakers. George Keith, imprisoned in 1676, had written of the attitude towards mystical theology within Quakerism. Keith spoke of the ‘Divine Seed’ found inside man which allowed the individual to ‘turn unto God’ when ‘he doth inwardly manifest and reveal himself by his Holy Spirit’. Although most denied this fact, ‘those called the Mysticks’ agreed with the Quakers on the concept of the divine presence within, but instead insisted that mankind was ‘polluted in their gross abominations and lusts’. Rather than the immediate presence the Quakers believed in, mysticks argued that the soul had to first attain some ‘qualifications and dispositions, which cleanse it from its gross impurities’. This was the soul’s ‘abnegation of all Creatures, and of its own self’ which made it possible for man to receive God’s divine presence. The Quaker position was rather one where the divine presence appeared differently to holy and clean souls than it did to unclean ones. In the holy he declared himself immediately, in the unclean he slowly awakened the inner divine seed, calling them towards him and removing corruptions and

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<sup>944</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 117.

<sup>945</sup> John Spurr, ‘The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689’, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 104 (1989), pp. 927-46, p. 932; Gordon J. Schochet, ‘From Persecution to “Toleration”’, in Lois G. Schworer (ed.), *Liberty Secured? Britain before and after 1688* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1922), pp. 122-57.

<sup>946</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 201. See also Mark Goldie, ‘The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England’, in O.P. Grell, J. L. Israel and N. Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England, 1646- 1689* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 331-68.

<sup>947</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D 833, fol. 66<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>948</sup> Charles Leslie, *A reply to a book en titul'd, Anguis Flagellatus* (London, 1702), unpaginated page entitled ‘Advertisement’

evils within them.<sup>949</sup> This was a fundamental difference between Quakerism and mystical theology, but nevertheless suggests Keith appreciated the common ground. The theme was also developed in Robert Barclay's *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678). Like the Philadelphians, Barclay believed that the practice of worshiping God within the 'inward Temple of the heart' was a belief 'commended, and practised by the most Pious of all sorts, in all ages'. From this tradition 'the name of Mysticks hath arisen, as of a certain Sect generally commended by all'. The mysticks among the Catholic Church were expressly mentioned in reference to Baker's *Sancta Sophia*, which was quoted at length. Barclay wondered if Baker was representative of the deeper true 'substance of the Popish Religion' which rejected all external forms of worship in favour of inner spirituality. Barclay broke with mystical theology when describing how mysticks 'make of it a mystery only to be attained by a few men or women in a Cloyster' and presented it as a reward for 'wearying themselves with many outward Ceremonies and Observations'. The Quakers were thus superior to the mysticks of Catholicism as they had been raised by Christ to practice inner spirituality without limitations. They shared with writers like Baker the belief in the primacy of the inner spirit, which was the 'best of Worships, which the best of men in all ages and of all sects have commended'.<sup>950</sup> On these grounds, the shared enthusiasm for mystical theology and the primacy of the spirit meant that Charles Leslie may not have been inaccurate in his observation that Quakers and Philadelphians shared common ground.

By 1702 the Philadelphians were the subject of rumours around London and accused of 'great and scandalous Immoralities'. Although Roach had earlier admitted in the *Theosophical Transactions* of 1697 that the Toleration Act had forced them into the public, they now presented this fact as an act of conformity. Whereas the Philadelphians had met twice weekly in private for mutual edification, they now held meetings publically and 'made use of the Liberty which the Law allows'. They stressed that they met on a Sunday afternoon in the place 'Enter'd in the Register of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's' rather than on a Sunday morning, which was 'the proper Time for Church-Communion'. They also went to great lengths to stress that although they had members from the Church of England and other Protestant denominations at their meetings, they had 'not any one that is a Roman Catholick'. They had not set themselves up 'with any Sectarian Purpose' nor had the 'base

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<sup>949</sup> George Keith, *The way to the city of God described, or, A plain declaration how any man may, within the day of visitation given him of God, pass out of the unrighteous into the righteous state as also how he may go forward in the way of holiness and righteousness, and so be fitted for the kingdom of God, and the beholding and enjoying thereof* (London, 1678), pp. 11-13.

<sup>950</sup> Robert Barclay, *An apology for the true Christian divinity, as the same is held forth, and preached by the people, called, in scorn, Quakers being a full explanation and vindication of their principles and doctrines, by many arguments, deduced from Scripture and right reason, and the testimony of famous authors, both ancient and modern, with a full answer to the strongest objections usually made against them, presented to the King* ([London?], 1678), p. 255.

and sinister Aims' that 'some have Suggested to the World'. They insisted they shared with many a 'Common Cause against Vice, Profaneness and Antichristianism'.<sup>951</sup> This was a new found language of conformity for the Philadelphians, stressing that they were not 'for turning the World upside down, as some have Represented em'.<sup>952</sup> Especially interesting was the outright claim that they had no Catholics at their meetings, suggesting that there were some rumours that there were. This assertion was likely to do with an earlier debate Francis Lee had entered into concerning Quietism and Madame Bourignon, which painted Quietists as subversive and dangerous Catholic enthusiasts. The last thing the Philadelphians needed was rumours to also spread that Quietism was increasing at their meetings.

The links between Quakers, Philadelphians, Pietists and Quietists were made known in the attacks of John Cockburn. Cockburn had spent many years in the court of the exiled James II in St. Germain, but after failing to convert to Catholicism had returned to England. He had striking family connections to many associated with the Philadelphians; his brother-in-law was George Garden of the Scottish mystical circle, while his cousin was Henry Scougal, the author of the popular mystical tract *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. Tristram Clarke has noted that Cockburn's attacks on Madame Bourignon were 'reflected his own renunciation of the Quietist spirituality which he had imbibed' from his uncle, cousin and brother-in-law.<sup>953</sup> Cockburn himself admitted that he had 'long since turn'd off the Conversation of the Mysticks', suggesting that this was a personal attack on members of his family and their associates.<sup>954</sup> He praised Charles Leslie's 1696 anti-Quaker work *A Snake in the Grass* as a cure to the spread of Quakerism. He wanted to further cure the spread of more enthusiastic religion by attacking Bourignon in his own work, spurred on by the publication of her *The Light of the World* in 1696. He attacked the 'Enthusiastical Delusions of Madam Antonia Bourignon and her great Disciple. Monsieur Poiret' who apparently had few admirers on their own country, but far too many in England and Scotland.<sup>955</sup> Francis Lee, along with George Garden from the Scottish circle, were prompted to reply when Cockburn published his *Bourignianism Detected* (1698). In it he explained how Bourignon had gained followers because she spoke and wrote 'more plainly and

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<sup>951</sup> *The Vindication and Justification of the Philadelphian Society* (London, 1702).

<sup>952</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 9. Lee continued to state that they were 'not Enemies to the Civil or Ecclesiastic Rights of Any'.

<sup>953</sup> Tristram Clarke, 'Cockburn, John (1652–1729)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5774>, accessed 12 June 2014]

<sup>954</sup> John Cockburn, *A letter from John Cockburn, D.D., to his friend in London giving an account why the other narratives about Bourignianism are not yet publish'd, and answering some reflections pass'd upon the first* (London, 1698), p. 26.

<sup>955</sup> John Cockburn, *Fifteen sermons preach'd upon several occassions, and on various subjects by John Cockburn* (London, 1697), sigs. A6<sup>v</sup>-A6<sup>f</sup>.

*intelligibly than any of the Mystick Sect*'.<sup>956</sup> 'Our *Quakers* and *Philadelphians*' he argued, 'as well as the *Quietists* and *Pietists* abroad, are of the same kidney, and do all stand upon the same foundation; so that what overturns one, overturns all'.<sup>957</sup> He may well have been following Gerard Croese's *A History of the Quakers* (1697), newly translated from Latin, which attempted to link the revival of mystical theology by the Quietists, which had apparently laid dormant in the papacy, with the Pietists influenced by Jacob Boehme. '*Mysticks, Molinists* and *Quakers*' were all of the same tree, and the Quakers were among a 'Religious crew which they call *Mysticks*' in England, all of which were branches of Quietism.<sup>958</sup> The Philadelphians had never hid these connections before, but now they were being openly challenged over them.

Lee replied in a postscript to *The State of the Philadelphian Society* that he objected to the 'Comprehensive Blow' Cockburn had delivered. He admitted that Quakers, Quietists and Pietists shared the same 'Resolution of Faith' as the Philadelphians, but left whether they should all be condemned together to the discretion of the reader. Instead Lee simply asked if such a respected figure as John of the Cross should be smeared as an enthusiast, despite being an ardent critic of enthusiasm, and called for Bourignon's writings to be judged by some neutral; a rather weak defence compared to the more substantial one composed by George Garden.<sup>959</sup> Cockburn's vicious reply condemned any group believing themselves to be 'Masters of Celestial Politicks' and attacked mystical theology specifically as having corrupted 'the minds of the Monks, Hermits, and other Religious' in France and Italy. He continued to note:

For though they, now and then, do deliver pious and useful Thoughts; yet generally their Imagination is so much heated with the contemplation of uncommon things, that they, for the most part, rave and talk extravagantly: and, in my judgment, it is equally useful and well-spent time, to dive into their Meaning, as to trace the Notions of a Bedlamite. Mystical Divinity contributes as little to True Religion, as Profound Metaphysicks do to the solid Use of Reason: the Chimera's and subtle Notions of the one and other, make giddy Heads fit only to be kept within the Walls of a Cloister; for if they walk abroad, they are laugh'd at, and their singular Notions and Whimsies obstruct both their Esteem and the Good which otherwise they might do.<sup>960</sup>

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<sup>956</sup> John Cockburn, *Bourignianism detected, or, The delusions and errors of Antonia Bourignon, and her growing sect which may also serve for a discovery of all other enthusiastical impostures* (London, 1698), p. 67.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>958</sup> Gerard Croese, *A History of the Quakers*, (London, 1696), pp. 91-92, 261-62.

<sup>959</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 30. See also Garden, *An apology for M. Antonia Bourignon in four parts*.

<sup>960</sup> Lee, *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, p. 26.

Another work published in 1698 made the link between Quakers, Philadelphians and Quietists even more pronounced. Charles Leslie conjured up an image of ‘Bourignianism’ as an infection spreading through Scotland and London. It posed such a threat that Leslie thought ‘Bourignonists’ should be held as the foremost type of heretic in England. The movement had gained the attention of learned men, both in England, Scotland and abroad, who were translating Bourignon’s works into English. They needed to be forcefully attacked so that they ‘may not make Great In-roads upon Christianity’ and become a formidable force. If they did, Leslie warned, they would become a second version of the Quakers, growing until their numbers could not be stopped, at which point they would then ‘Compound at last for an Act of Toleration’.<sup>961</sup> The link between Quakers and Philadelphians was made forcefully by him in 1702 when he accused the Philadelphians and Quakers of attending each other’s meetings. He refused to mention the Philadelphians any further for fear that ‘the Confuting of them may make them Live longer in the World, than they wou’d [sic] otherwise Last’.<sup>962</sup> Years after Lead’s death Leslie still complained of sectarians rising up in smaller numbers but greater wickedness, angry at how some claimed to have ‘been in an Higher Heaven than that into which Christ has Ascended, as I have heard Jean Leads [sic], the Mother of the Philadelphians say’.<sup>963</sup>

The Philadelphians were thus inculcated in a number of different movements. They were associated with Quakers and political subversion in the minds of many. Thanks to the attacks of Cockburn and Leslie, they were also smeared as Quietists and enthusiasts. Their association with mystical theology meant that their opponents could also hint at their connections to Catholic Quietism, and thanks to Leslie, they were swept up as part of a dangerous and subversive new ‘Bourignianism’ which threatened to spread across England as the Quakers had done and further weaken the established Church. Mystical theology, Quietism and ‘Bourignianism’ were all characterized as ‘Delusions that disturb the Peace and Unity of the Church, and which lead private Persons unawares both into Temporal and Eternal Ruine’.<sup>964</sup> These attacks, alongside the previous criticisms of Henry Dodwell and Edward Stephens, suggest that the Philadelphians’ approval of works of mystical theology, as well as aligning themselves with Quietists and Pietists on the Continent, was the death knell for the group.

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<sup>961</sup> Charles Leslie, *The history of sin and heresie attempted, from the first war that they rais'd in heaven through their various successes and progress upon earth to the final victory over them, and their eternal condemnation in hell : in some meditations upon the feast of St. Michael and all angels* (London, 1698), pp. 34-35.

<sup>962</sup> Leslie, *A reply to a book en titul'd, Anguis Flagellatus*, unpaginated page entitled ‘Advertisement’.

<sup>963</sup> Charles Leslie, *The Rehearsal, Saturday, January 17. 1707* (London, 1707).

<sup>964</sup> Cockburn, *Bourignianism detected*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

In 1703 they published *The Protestation of the Philadelphian Society*. It proved to be a whimpering plea for their innocence. They protested against the ‘great Degeneracy and Apostacy of the whole Christian Church in general’ and complained that their message about the coming Philadelphian Church had not been met with the reception they expected. Nevertheless they were confident that they had ‘sufficiently discharg’d themselves in all this time; not hiding the Will and Counsel of God, that was manifested to them’. They again restated that they were not a new sect or religion and had never wanted to further divide Christianity, but rather wanted to heal divisions and spread peace among all denominations. The ‘general Deadness and Coldness of this Sardinian Age’ had forced them to suffer ‘the rage of Men and Devils’. Yet they insisted that Satan’s wicked agents and sinners were not the reason they were withdrawing from public testimony, but rather that they felt they had ‘more than Sufficiently warn’d them of that Day, which is speedily coming upon the World’ and felt it their duty to retire and ‘wait to see the Issue of what they have Declared’.<sup>965</sup>

Their critics revelled in this withdrawal. A mock elegy written in 1703 derided the Philadelphians and their beliefs:

Good English Folk, come shake both Sides and Head,  
 For after all her Vaunt Poor Philly’s Dead.  
 Who in this Nation made such a fearful riot,  
 Folks could not eat and drink their common Dyet.  
 Nor play, nor fight, nor go to Church at quiet.  
 Whose notions soard above the starry Sky-Balls,  
 Beyond the reach of dim, and clearer Eye-Balls.  
 Icarus like she flew to near the flame,  
 Melted her waxen wings, and down she came.

It mocked them as ‘Quaker a la mode’, implied that some members were ‘bred and born’ Jesuits, and jibed them as being ‘conducted by the lame and blind’, a clear reference to Jane Lead. ‘With half a handful they at first begun; Preacht, Thumpt, and Scolded: every year lost one’, a particularly insulting line read, ‘Till at last they Preach’d to stocks and walls of stone. But now O now, te whit te whoo, the bird themselves are flown’. Afterwards the charge of enthusiasm was levelled at them one final time:

You that in quest of Philadelphian greeting  
 Run up and down to find the Hoxden Meeting,  
 Since yet you have no had your belly full,  
 Enquire for the Town Doctor of the Skull,  
 That tempers addled brains; be sure to mind it,  
 At Hoxden Bethlehem, friend, if any where thou’t find it.<sup>966</sup>

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<sup>965</sup> British Library Harley MS 5946, fols. 244<sup>r</sup>-244<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>966</sup> Ibid., fols. 245<sup>r</sup>-247<sup>v</sup>. The Philadelphians responded with a ‘counter elegy’ which used the rhyming scheme of the original to reply in kind.



## Conclusion

By 1704 the Philadelphian Society had largely failed in its mission to encourage the new millennium and establish the Philadelphian Church on earth. The ecumenical and millennialistic beliefs expounded by Lee and Roach certainly had supporters in England, but for many more it conjured up too many bad memories of the radicalism of the Civil Wars and suspicions that the Philadelphians would once again try to turn the world upside down. Even their efforts to spread their beliefs in Germany and Holland were halted by suspicions that they were indeed promoting sectarianism. Johann Dittmar, their semi-formal representative in Germany, had already upset Johann Georg Gichtel, a leading theosopher, who then disputed some of their doctrines and articles. Gichtel also saw Lead's death in 1704 as a sign that her doctrines were false.<sup>967</sup> Closer to home the Philadelphians were associated with mystical theology which brought them to the attention of previous vocal critics of it, the loudest being Henry Dodwell. When combined with their similarities to the Quakers, the general fear of Quietism, and the larger concern that enthusiastic movements on the Continent could arrive in England and threaten the established Church, the Philadelphians were facing an uphill struggle from their very inception. The death of Jane Lead in 1704 was the final nail in the coffin of the Philadelphian mission in England, but it was the backlash against mystical theology which had truly killed the movement for brotherly love and peace between Christians.

Roach proved to be the only spiritual son of Lead that continued on the Philadelphian mission, combining it with that of the Camisard refugees referred to as the French Prophets in 1709, attaching himself to various other female visionaries such as the Quaker Sarah Wiltshire, who was described as having become 'his companion in the Philadelphian way'.<sup>968</sup> Francis Lee would somewhat turn his back on his Philadelphian phase in his *The History of Montanism*, published in George Hickeys' *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised* along with Nathaniel Spinckes' *The New Pretenders to Prophecy Examined* in 1709.<sup>969</sup> In his *History* Lee ridiculed the high position afforded to female visionaries in the second-century sect, whereas Spinckes would attack the Camisards Roach

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<sup>967</sup> Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>968</sup> Bodleian Library MS Rawl. D. 1318 fol. 55<sup>v</sup>. For this period see Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Lionel Laborie, *Enlightening Enthusiasm: Prophecy and Religious Experience in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

<sup>969</sup> Francis Lee, 'The History of Montanism', in George Hickeys, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised: In a Sermon Preach'd before the University of Oxford, &c. The Fourth Edition, much enlarged. By George Hickeys. D.D. With Two Discourses Occasioned by the New Prophets Pretensions to Inspiration and Miracles. The First The History of Montanism by a Lay-Gentleman. The Other The New Pretenders to Prophecy Examined. By N. Spinckes, A Presbyterian of the Church of England* (London, 1709), pp. 73-352.

was mingling with.<sup>970</sup> Lee died in France in 1719 while in contact with the circle surrounding Madame Guyon, suggesting his interest in mystical theology and Quietism never truly abated.

The Philadelphians serve as a fitting place to finish the exploration of this thesis. They represent the establishment of the concept of a canon of Christian mystical writers, all of whom wrote about mystical theology and could be understood to form a distinct branch of religious practice which would come to be termed 'mysticism'. The stage was set for the word to emerge in the 1730s as an Enlightenment term of abuse for the sort of ecstatic and personal religious experience the Philadelphians believed was occurring all over in the 1690s. They should therefore take their rightful place as the point at which the concept of a canon of mysticks as Christian writers of mystical theology fully emerged in England. If we want to speak of the first comprehensive engagement with the notion of an extensive and cross-confessional Christian mystical tradition in English, they are unavoidable. They were an amalgamation of a whole different range of attitudes towards mystical theology; they fed on the Benedictine, antinomian and Familist uses of mystical theology from the earlier seventeenth century, as well as from contemporary positive uses of mystical theology on the Continent in Quietist and Pietist circles. Yet with this came all the negative connotations associated with these movements- smears of enthusiasm, suspicions of sectarianism, and condemnation of popish errors. Their omnivorous appetite for all things mystical proved to be their undoing.

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<sup>970</sup> Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion*, p 203; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, p. 166.

## Conclusion

This thesis has proposed a new understanding of the reception and influence of mystical theology in the seventeenth century. Using the influential work of Michel de Certeau, it has explored the English context of a much wider European phenomenon; the emergence of mystical theology as a specific discipline with its own ‘mystick authors’.<sup>971</sup> By focusing on references to ‘mysticks’ and ‘mystical theology’ this study has traced discussions concerning mystical theology in England among a wide range of religious groups. Rejecting the temptation to use the subjective and confusing term ‘mysticism’ to describe these discussions has allowed a new and more accurate narrative to emerge. The unavoidable fact is that ‘mysticism’ first appeared in the English language in the 1730s during the Enlightenment, and that any engagement with mystical works before that point was understood by a different name. In the 1730s mysticism emerged as a term ‘charged with the reproaches of misplaced sexuality, unintelligibility, pretension, and reason-bedamned extravagance’, whereby ‘the mystics were, in sum, just another narrow sect, among many, prickling gentlemanly forms of established Christianity’.<sup>972</sup> By recognizing that ‘mysticism’ only came into being in the eighteenth century after mystical theology had featured heavily in the religious debates of the seventeenth century, we can come to more accurately understand its origins.

As we have seen, the evolution of mystical theology into ‘mysticism’ was a long and arduous process. Schmidt observes that ‘mysticism’ was essentially viewed as a Christian enthusiasm from the eighteenth century onwards, and this thesis has traced how this came about. It has suggested that engagement with mystical theology should be seen as part of a ‘long Reformation’ in England, whereby Protestantism slowly adapted pre-existing traditions as its own. Influenced by French and Spanish Counter-Reformation currents of spirituality found in the writings of Benet of Canfield, Pierre de Bérulle, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, the seventeenth century saw several attempts by Protestants to assimilate mystical theology into their existing religious beliefs.<sup>973</sup> As Augustine Baker was arguably closest to all these currents at the start of the seventeenth century, it is no surprise that his work had considerable influence on Protestants across the period. As we have seen, the Benedictines were conscious that their own works were being a little too well received in certain circles in England, and struggled to separate their works of mystical theology from those of the sectarians. The publications of Francis Rous, John Everard and Giles Randall all

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<sup>971</sup> Certeau, *The Mystical Fable*, pp. 103-4, 107.

<sup>972</sup> Schmidt, ‘The Making of “Mysticism” in the Anglo-American World’, p. 456.

<sup>973</sup> For the French context see Kent Emery, Jr., ‘Mysticism and the Coincidence of Opposites in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1984), pp. 3-23.

show that this assimilation could be a very fruitful process; Rous's insistence that men could become 'labouring contemplators' in life and Everard's description of the soul being dissolved like a 'poor drop' of water into the divine ocean show the variety of results this produced. The Philadelphians Francis Lee and Richard Roach clearly understood their main prophetic, Jane Lead, to be an example of a living mystick, someone whose work would ideally have been considered among the more established works within the canon. Their enthusiasm for mystical theology was partly a product of the dual influence of both Continental Pietism and Quietism, with Pierre Poiret, Madame Bourignon, and Madame Guyon all heavily influencing their beliefs. By the early eighteenth century this process of assimilation was largely complete, paving the way for 'mysticism' to be constructed as a wider Christian enthusiasm.<sup>974</sup>

The association of mystical theology with enthusiasm also emerged in the seventeenth century. For its critics, mystical theology served to fulfil a variety of polemical needs. For Presbyterians in the 1640s it served to invoke the dual fears of popery and disorder, and was used to present Independent calls for a more comprehensive national Church as the gateway to heresy, sexual licentiousness and social upheaval. To do this they revived the spectre of Familism and linked sectarianism with the 'popish errors' of mystical theology. For those defending the Episcopalian Church of England in the Interregnum and Restoration periods, mystical theology became a weapon with which to attack both sectarians and Catholics through the growing rhetoric of melancholy and enthusiasm. Mystical theology was swept up in the wider appropriation of medical theories of melancholy into polemical discourse; it became part of a process whereby Anglicans could discount sectarian and Catholic claims to divine revelation as the products of illusion, superstition or mental unbalance. It also played a supporting role in the ongoing conflicts between Catholic and Protestants over the role of Scripture and the limits of tradition. For writers such as Edward Stillingfleet, mystical theology was an enthusiasm which had dressed itself up as revelation and gained authority within official Catholic doctrine. The mysticks so revered by the Catholic Church were used by its critics to attack it, now presented as deluded and superstitious enthusiasts.

Considering mystical theology within the framework of a 'long Reformation' has allowed us to dispel some common assumptions and revealed the dangers of relying too

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<sup>974</sup> More on the continuing struggle between 'mysticism' and rationality can be found in B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), ch. 4. Young presents 'mysticism' as a form of 'anti-Newtonianism', a Counter-Enlightenment reaction to rational discourse (pp. 120-21). As this thesis has shown, this process occurred in the seventeenth century and was a product of rationalist reactions to mystical theology.

heavily on constructs of ‘mysticism’. The study of mystical theology in the seventeenth century has been stunted by the concept of ‘medieval English mysticism’, whereby any engagement with works of contemplation and mystical theology in England has largely been assumed to be a pre-Reformation, and thus Catholic, phenomenon. This was the product of religious confessionalism in twentieth-century scholarship which has heavily influenced our understanding of both the Reformation and the history of mystical theology. The reality is that England before the Reformation was characterized by a growing secular (i.e. non-monastic) interest in mystical theology and contemplation, whereby works which had once been the preserve of the monk, nun and anchorite were incorporated into the spirituality of the laity. To argue that this interest somehow vanished with the Reformation is to fall into the twentieth-century historiographical trap that England was Catholic, then suddenly Protestant. As this thesis has argued, Catholics and Protestants in the seventeenth century shared more in common in terms of spirituality than polemical works of controversy suggested. The hunger of the English for mystical works continued on unabated throughout the Reformation. Protestants regularly assimilated Catholic works of spirituality into their own beliefs in a way that many in the seventeenth century were, and many still are to this day, uncomfortable admitting. By dispelling categories such as ‘late medieval English mysticism’, ‘Quaker mysticism’, and ‘Puritan mysticism’, all of which are modern constructs, the interplay between groups of various religious persuasions when engaging with mystical theology has been revealed. Since its very inception in the eighteenth century ‘mysticism’ has meant different things to different groups and has been used to a variety of ends.<sup>975</sup> The term has been applied so widely and subjectively (often without specific definition or justification) in modern studies that scholarship may well soon reach saturation point and even have to begin discussing ‘mysticisms’. It is perhaps at this point that more will question the usefulness of the term in historical study.

The common theme found among Benedictines, Puritans, antinomians and Philadelphians in their engagement with mystical theology was its ability to bring authority as a ‘way of knowing’. A natural consequence of the split between scholastic and mystical theology in the late-medieval period, it became a way for those on the sidelines to claim authority. For the Benedictines it was a way to authenticate inner spiritual experiences. Baker provided the nuns with the works on which to base their mystical experiences and gave them a new-found spiritual freedom. It also freed them from the limitations enforced

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<sup>975</sup> Thus even in twenty-first century scholarship Grace M. Jantzen’s observation that ‘who counts as a mystic is a social construction’ still applies; Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, p. 24. This also brings a contemporary application of Schmidt’s observation of the ‘continuing shifts in who was utilized by whom to constitute the category of mystical writers’ originally applied to the American Enlightenment; Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, p. 11.

upon them by their gender through the celebration of the experiences of female mysticks such as Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena; the success of this endeavour made clear in their confessor's complaint that Baker's doctrines had taken away his authority and 'geven [it] to women'. For Francis Rous it was a way of securing knowledge of election, which in turn inspired the individual to a beneficial active life for the good of the community of saints. For John Everard it was used to attack 'worldly knowledge' and argue that true knowledge of God was given to the foolish and weak, rather than those who maintained temporal power. For Cambridge Platonists such as Henry More, the rhetoric of self-annihilation found in mystical theology was useful for restoring the deformity of the soul, where the purified mind and senses could enjoy divine communication. For others such as John Norris, scholastic knowledge was to be replaced with the 'Fire of our Hearts' which yearned for the love of God. For the Philadelphians, mystical theology was proof of the 'inward way & conduct of the soul by the Holy Spirit'. Mystical works were the testaments of what remained of pure ancient Christianity, and mysticks were used by God to give knowledge of the imminence of Christ's second coming. By the time of the downfall of the Philadelphian Society, mystical theology was the property of Christians throughout history and from all denominations. Whether the authority of mystical theology was to be recognized was still as divisive as ever. Mysticks were both 'holy and peculiar people'.

This thesis has opened up several avenues for future research. Although Schmidt's article has provided a firm foundation for the exploration of the emergence of the term 'mysticism' in eighteenth-century polemical discourse, more work needs to be done to explore exactly how and why the phrase developed. Only by exploring the range of applications of the word in the eighteenth century can we begin to critically assess the usefulness of the phrase to twenty-first century scholars. Using the methodology advanced in this study, the life and writings of William Law also need reassessment in order to discover his contribution to preserving the canon of 'mystick authors'. This study of mystical theology in the seventeenth century has therefore laid the foundation for subsequent studies of the term 'mysticism' in the eighteenth century. Ultimately more work needs to be done to explore and document the variety of ways the term 'mysticism' has been deployed from the 1730s to the present day.

This study is by no means a definitive collection of references to 'mysticks' and 'mystical theology' in the seventeenth century, but has attempted to provide as wide an overview as possible. The constant discovery of more material relating to the Benedictines and the Philadelphian Society means that many more references will likely continue to surface. Dr William's Library, London, is in the process of fully archiving and cataloguing

their manuscript stock, which will undoubtedly aid studies of the Philadelphians. The gargantuan efforts of John Clark to transcribe the works of Augustine Baker, as well as James Hogg's consistent efforts in publishing these transcripts, has meant that the diasporic manuscripts of Baker are more readily accessible. Further exploration of Baker's manuscripts and especially those of his followers such as Barbara Constable will allow for a better understanding of how the doctrines of Baker and his mystick authors were preserved through subsequent generations of Benedictine nuns. It is also worth investigating whether Baker truly was the originator of the 'mystick canon' at the start of the seventeenth century, or was influenced by other writers and compilers from different English religious orders. Only further archival work will illuminate these issues. Although Michel de Certeau hints at the evolution of the term in French, scholars with more linguistic skills may be able to delve deeper to trace a similar evolution of the term 'mystick' in other vernaculars to further highlight the links between England and the Continent.

Research into irenic cross-confessional spirituality has also been central to this study. Accounts of the Reformation and religion more widely often stress the differences between Protestants and Catholics in the early modern period. We need to be more sensitive to the overlaps between those of different religions, to discover the more subtle similarities we are often distracted from by stark polemical clashes. Protestant uses of Catholic sources have dominated this thesis, but it is also worth remembering that the process could go the other way. Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1202, a compilation of different writings compiled by an anonymous Benedictine nun in 1724, is one such example.<sup>976</sup> As well as samples of the writings of Augustine Baker, Angela of Foligno, and Miguel de Molinos, it also contains Archbishop Fénelon's letters to Madame Guyon. The inclusion of those letters in the manuscripts of the Benedictines tantalisingly suggests an interest in Guyon they shared with Philadelphians, Scottish Episcopalians, Pietists and Quietists. Much more could, and will, be said on this. Tracing common spiritual interests across confessional boundaries has allowed for a new understanding of mystical theology in the period and could likely be applied to a diverse range of religious issues.

Studying mystical theology in seventeenth-century England has touched on a number of important themes. It has highlighted that despite assumptions that Catholics and Protestants saw each other as incompatible polar opposites, there was much common ground in terms of spirituality and devotion. This interaction between those of different confessions, and the assimilation of Catholic spirituality into a Protestant framework, adds to our understanding of the 'long Reformation' in England. We have also seen how combining

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<sup>976</sup> See Holloway (ed.), *'Collections' by an English Nun in Exile*.

print and manuscript sources can lead to conclusions that neither would suggest when used independently. This thesis has been dependent on combining opinions found in printed works with those circulated privately to form an analysis, and reminds us to be careful of relying too heavily on certain types of source material. Mystical theology in England has also proven to be intimately linked with wider European movements, and suggests that we should be cautious not to settle for an anglocentric focus when exploring religion in England. We have explored how religious issues could be used for political ends; mystical theology featured heavily in debates over the nature of the English Church, the religion of the monarch, and issues of toleration. It often featured in the construction of the Catholic 'other' by Protestant writers, who used it to argue their point of view on a range of issues. Finally, we have seen how important it is to be aware of the fluid and contested meanings of words in the seventeenth century, which can be used to discover wider religious and political motivations. It is only through a concerted effort to avoid anachronism, and a detailed survey of the variety of different meanings of words, that we can begin to comprehend seventeenth-century issues in a way that truthfully reflects the reality of those who lived through them.



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